

CRANFIELD UNIVERSITY

DAVID W. SHIN

ALTERNATIVE EXPLANATION OF NORTH KOREA'S SURVIVAL:  
SUCCESSFUL APPLICATION OF SMART POWER

DEFENCE AND SECURITY

PhD Thesis  
Academic Year: 2013 - 2016

Supervisor: Laura Cleary  
July 2016

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the degree of PhD

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## ABSTRACT

The original contribution of this study is to demonstrate how North Korea survives by using smart power. The existing literature has offered partial explanations, but many have lost their explanatory power over time and there seems to be no definitive answer to explain how North Korea survives. This multi-case study was designed to explore how the North uses smart power by examining its provocations from the Korean War to August 2015. The rationale for this study is to increase understanding of Pyongyang's behavior and offer recommendations to bring long-term stability to the Korean Peninsula. This study purposefully began with the Korean War because it was assumed that, without understanding the origin of North Korean provocations, it would be difficult to provide the proper temporal context for other provocations.

This study reveals that Kim Il-sung and his guerrillas consolidated power and established totalitarian rule dominated by his *Juche* ideology (self-reliance). Subsequently, they waged a long war of reunification from 1948 to the 1980s. Although Kim's smart power attempts failed to achieve his principal aim of reunification, when Beijing and Moscow abandoned him in the early 1990s he focused on regime survival. He bolstered his weak hand by playing the nuclear card to buy more time to ensure the hereditary succession by his son Kim Jong-il, who defied predictions he would not survive and proclaimed *Songun* (military-first) to deal with the changing international environment. He demonstrated his own skill by exploiting Seoul's Sunshine Policy and successfully negotiating three nuclear agreements with the U.S. After his death, Kim Jong-un waged a reign of terror to consolidate power and manufactured crises to bolster his legitimacy and demonstrate his leadership. He also invoked his grandfather's anti-Japanese legacy and the *Byungjin* policy (simultaneous development of nuclear weapons and the economy) to legitimize his rule. The evidence shows he is rational and that offers opportunities to resolve the North Korea issue.

### Keywords:

North Korea, Kim Il-Sung, Kim Jong-Il, Kim Jong-Un, *Juche*, *Songun*, *Byungjin*, Smart Power, Sunshine Policy, Nuclear Weapons, Provocations, Reunification.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The genesis of this study was in late 2011 when I read the book by Joseph S. Nye, Jr., titled *The Future of Power*. As I read the book, I began to realize it was plausible that North Korea was using what Nye described as smart power to achieve its desired outcomes. My experience negotiating with the North Korean People's Army (KPA) at Panmunjom in the late 1990s and supporting the Six-Party Talks in the mid-2000s taught me that North Korean diplomats and military officers are capable of playing a weak hand very well. Since my experience at the Pentagon dealing with the North Korean artillery attack on Yeonpyeong Island in November 2010 was fresh on my mind at the time, as many observers attempted to decipher what had occurred, I considered doing my research about the history of North Korean provocations.

As I floated the idea with several colleagues at the National Intelligence University (NIU) in Washington, DC, Dr. Duane C. Young encouraged me to pursue a PhD at Cranfield University and introduced me to Professor Laura Cleary, who eventually became my supervisor. She heads the Centre for International Security and Resilience, and her many research interests includes the evolution of the United Kingdom's Defence Engagement Strategy. She quickly became a champion for this study and recruited her colleagues Professors Matt Qvortrup and Bryan Watters as part of my supervisory team. As a political scientist and constitutional lawyer, with extensive experience as a diplomat, civil servant, and journalist, Professor Qvortrup guided my efforts to understand the historical, cultural, and political context of this study. Although he left Cranfield for Coventry University in the summer of 2015, I am grateful for all his support, guidance, and friendship. Professor Watters' role was to ensure that the leadership of the three Kims was properly examined. He was the ideal scholar to guide this effort as a retired brigadier in the British Army and the serving Director of Cranfield's Defence Leadership Program. In addition to providing encouragement and support, he shared his work with me and identified the key issues for consideration in this study.

On the other hand, Professor Thomas O'brien, who is a political scientist specializing in international development and public policy, had to fill in when

Professor Qvortrup left the University. Despite the circumstance, he has been a welcome addition to the team. In hindsight, I am so grateful my supervisor saw the potential of this study and envisioned the way ahead from the very beginning as she assembled my supervisory team. I am eternally indebted to Professor Cleary for her timely guidance, sage advice, encouragement, and thoughtful mentoring through the entire thesis process.

In addition to my supervisory team, many others helped me complete this journey. Professor Charles Armstrong at Columbia University reviewed my initial proposal in July 2013, encouraged me to pursue the study, and offered helpful comments as I began to shape my thoughts regarding the thesis. On the other hand, Professor Michael J. Mazarr of the U.S. National War College offered more critical comments in the early stages of my work which helped me reconsider how to portray the results of my findings, and I am thankful for his assistance. I also benefited from two scholars who conducted comparable research regarding North Korean provocations. First, Professor Narushige Michishita read portions of my work, provided critical comments regarding the use of Nye's smart power theory as an analytical framework, and offered thoughtful suggestions to focus my research. Second, Dr. Danny Wallace provided detailed comments on several chapters and helpful suggestions to shorten the study. I am thankful to all of them for helping me gain my bearing as I sought clear direction for this study.

Dr. Young, Colonel (Retired) Ashton Ormes, U.S. Army, Dr. William Spracher, another colleague at NIU, and Group Captain (Retired) Athol Forrest, New Zealand Air Force, also reviewed portions or all of my work and offered detailed comments. Dr. Young had to put up with my regular visits to his office to discuss everything from the thesis process at Cranfield to various topics regarding my research. I am truly thankful for his support, advice, and friendship. Dr. Spracher also deserves special recognition for carefully reading and editing my work, and always sharing his words of encouragement. Group Captain Forrest, former Defence Attaché to Seoul and an international defense relations specialist, read the entire thesis and always gave detailed and critical comments with encouragement. In that regard, Colonel Ormes, who led the

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In late March 2014, I presented a paper on North Korea's use of smart power at the Five Eyes Analytic Workshop hosted by the University of Mississippi, and a revised version of the paper was presented at the International Studies Association conference in New Orleans in mid-February 2015. I would like to thank the participants of both events who attended my presentation and shared their helpful comments with me. Both events were a

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As shown, I have received much help to bring this unique study to life but any errors and shortcomings are solely my own.

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## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Smart Power	Joseph Nye argued that smart power is the “ability to combine the hard power of coercion or payment with the soft power of attraction into a successful strategy.” <sup>i</sup> The essence of Nye’s concept is resolving the challenge of power conversion. This means actors involved must understand the power resources available and appreciate “the problems of combining them effectively in various contexts.” <sup>ii</sup> The attainment of favorable outcomes also requires “contextual intelligence” to understand the evolving domestic and international situation to identify the right mix of hard and soft power to achieve desired outcomes. <sup>iii</sup>
Provocation	Hannah Fischer defined provocation as an “armed invasion; border violations; infiltration of armed saboteurs and spies; hijacking; kidnapping; terrorism (including assassination and bombing); threat/intimidation against political leaders, media personnel, and institutions; incitement aimed at the overthrow of the South Korean government; actions undertaken to impede progress in major negotiations; and tests of ballistic missiles and nuclear weapons.” <sup>iv</sup> On the other hand, the Center for Strategic and International Studies focused only on provocations that resulted in casualties which included “major armed conflicts, military/espionage incursions, border infractions, [and] acts of terrorism.” As a result, it omitted North Korean verbal rhetoric, kidnappings, missile launches, and nuclear tests. <sup>v</sup> This study’s definition of provocations will be more inclusive and include all of these activities identified in both studies. Moreover, many believe the regime has successfully employed a strategy based on a cycle of nuclear provocations. North Korea would begin by manufacturing a crisis; then it would be open to negotiations, only to backtrack to get a better deal. If that failed, it would escalate the crisis and be willing to re-negotiate to continue the cycle. <sup>vi</sup>

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<sup>i</sup> Joseph S. Nye, Jr., “The War on Soft Power,” *Foreign Policy*, April 12, 2011, [http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/04/12/the\\_war\\_on\\_soft\\_power](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/04/12/the_war_on_soft_power) (accessed June 12, 2014).

<sup>ii</sup> Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *The Future of Power* (New York: Public Affairs, 2011), p. 23.

<sup>iii</sup> Nye, *The Future of Power*, p. 212.

<sup>iv</sup> Hannah Fischer, “North Korean Provocative Actions, 1950-2007,” Congressional Research Service, April 20, 2007, p. CRS-1.

<sup>v</sup> Office of the Korea Chair, “Record of North Korea’s Major Conventional Provocations since 1960s,” Center for Strategic and International Studies, May 25, 2010, p. 1.

<sup>vi</sup> Gregory J. Moore, ed., *North Korean Nuclear Operationality: Regional Security & Nonproliferation* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014), p. x.

Totalitarian Dictatorship	Carl Friedrich and Zbigniew Brzezinski claimed there are six traits of totalitarian dictatorships and they are dominant ideology, single party led by a dictator, secret police control over society, monopoly control of information, regime control of the army, and central command of the economy. I accept these six traits of totalitarianism as I proceed to examine the three Kims.
<i>Juche</i>	While many scholars have simply used “self-reliance” to define <i>Juche</i> , Suh Jae-jung argued it is “best understood as subjecthood or being a master of one’s own fate.” <sup>vii</sup> According to Michael Robinson, <i>Juche</i> symbolizes “one’s independence and autonomy from any external control or manipulation.” <sup>viii</sup> Bruce Cumings went on to say that <i>Juche</i> “means self-reliance and independence in politics, economics, defense, and ideology.” <sup>ix</sup> The concept is best understood as an antonym for <i>sadaejjuui</i> , which means “serving and relying upon foreign power.” In the end, Cumings noted that the meaning of <i>Juche</i> “might best be translated as putting Korean things first, always: it suggests a type of nationalism.” <sup>x</sup> Kim Il-sung’s claimed <i>Juche</i> meant “doing everything in conformity with the actual conditions of our country, creatively applying the general principles of Marxism-Leninism plus the experiences of other countries to our own country in accordance with our actual conditions.” He also stressed Koreans had to solve their own problems and not depend on others to achieve the goals of the revolution. <sup>xi</sup> Hence, I will accept “self-reliance,” an expression of Korean nationalism, and “being a master of one’s own fate” as the core principles of <i>Juche</i> .

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<sup>vii</sup> Jae-Jung Suh, ed., *Origins of North Korea’s Juche: Colonialism, War and Development* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2013), p. 2.

<sup>viii</sup> Michael E. Robinson, *Korea’s Twentieth-Century Odyssey: A Short History* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2007), p. 159.

<sup>ix</sup> Bruce Cumings, *Korea’s Place in the Sun: A Modern History* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1997), pp. 402-404.

<sup>x</sup> Cumings, *Korea’s Place in the Sun*, pp. 402-404.

<sup>xi</sup> Baik Bong, *Kim Il Sung: Biography*, Volume [III] (Beirut, Lebanon: Dar Al-Talia, 1973), pp. 435-437.



<i>Suryong</i> (or Supreme Leader)	Suh Dae-sook noted that in the late 1960s North Korea began to use the term <i>Suryong</i> , which means the “Supreme Leader,” to describe Kim Il-sung. <sup>xii</sup> According to Cumings, the term <i>Suryong</i> comes from an old <i>Koguryo</i> <sup>xiii</sup> term that means “maximum leader.” <sup>xiv</sup> This study will accept the term <i>Suryong</i> to mean the member of the Kim family who is the official ruler of North Korea.
<i>Songun</i> (or Military-First Policy)	Ralph Hassig and Kongdan Oh argued the origin of <i>Songun</i> is Kim Il-sung’s Four Military Guidelines policy to deal with a complex international environment that was increasingly unfavorable to North Korea by the early 1960s. <sup>xv</sup> I agree there is a linkage between Kim Il-sung’s and Kim Jong-il’s responses to the changing international environment in the early 1960s and the mid-1990s. Kim Il-sung’s equal emphasis policy or simultaneous development of the economy and defense was really meant to prioritize the development of the military over the economy. <sup>xvi</sup>

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<sup>xii</sup> Suh Dae Sook, *Kim Il Sung: The North Korean Leader* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), p. 197.

<sup>xiii</sup> Lim Jae-Cheon, in his work titled *Kim Jong Il’s Leadership of North Korea*, argues that in the early 1990s North Korea rejuvenated the dynastic Korean history according to *Juche* themes. It constructed the tombs of King Tongmyong, founder of the Koguryo Dynasty, in May 1993; King Wang Kon, founder of Koryo, in February 1994; and Tangun, the mythical founder of Old Choson, in October 1994. The Kim regime finally subsumed the rulers of the Korean dynasties into the *Juche* history.

<sup>xiv</sup> Cumings, *Korea’s Place in the Sun*, p. 30.

<sup>xv</sup> Ralph Hassig and Kongdan Oh, *The Hidden People of North Korea: Everyday Life in the Hermit Kingdom* (Lanham, MD: Rowman& Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2009), pp. 178-179.

<sup>xvi</sup> KCNA, “New Strategic Line, Succession of Line of Simultaneously Developing Economy and Defense,” April 1, 2013, <http://www.kcna.us/2013/04/02/news-27/> (accessed September 26, 2015).

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ASW	Anti-submarine Warfare
APEC	Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation
BDA	Banco Delta Asia
CSIS	Center for Strategic and International Studies
CC	Central Committee (of the KWP)
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CMC	Central Military Commission
CJCS	Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS)
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CPV	Chinese People's Volunteers
CIAO	Columbia International Affairs Online
CRS	Congressional Research Service
CVID	Complete Verifiable Irreversible Dismantlement
DIA	Defense Intelligence Agency
DMZ	Demilitarized Zone
DNI	Director of National Intelligence
GPB	General Political Bureau
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HEU	Highly Enriched Uranium
HRDF	Homeland Reserve Defense Force
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
IC	Intelligence Community
INR	State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research
ICBM	Intercontinental Ballistic Missile
IOC	International Olympic Committee
IR	International Relations
JG	Jangmadang Generation
JCP	Japanese Communist Party
JCS	Joint Chiefs of Staff
JSA	Joint Security Area
KAL	Korean Airline

KIC	Kaesong Industrial Complex
KCIA	Korea Central Intelligence Agency
KCNA	Korea Central News Agency
KDP	Korean Democratic Party
KPA	Korean People's Army
KWP	Korean Workers' Party
LWR	Light Water Reactors
LFX	Live Fire Exercise
MW	Megawatt
MAC	Military Armistice Commission
MID	Militarized Interstate Disputes
MDL	Military Demarcation Line
MPS	Ministry of People's Security
MSC	Military Security Command
MoEE	Ministry of External Economy
MIA	Ministry of Internal Affairs
MPAF	Ministry of People's Armed Forces
MPS	Ministry of Public Security
MSD	Minsaengdan
NADA	National Aerospace Development Administration
NDC	National Defense Commission
NMCC	National Military Command Center
NSA	National Security Agency
NCO	Non-commissioned Officer
NGOs	Non-governmental Organizations
NPT	Non Proliferation Treaty
NEAJUA	Northeast Anti-Japanese United Army
NKIDP	North Korea International Documentation Project
NKPA	North Korean People's Army
NLL	Northern Limit Line
NWIs	Northwest Islands
OPCON	Operational Control
OGD	Organization and Guidance Department

PCs	People's Committees
PLA	People's Liberation Army
PDB	Political Defense Bureau
PSB	Political Security Bureau
PSI	Proliferation Security Initiative
PDS	Public Distribution System
ROK	Republic of Korea
RFE	Russian Far East
RGB	Reconnaissance General Bureau
6PT	Six-Party Talks
SCA	Soviet Civil Administration
SEZs	Special Economic Zones
SOEs	State Owned Enterprises
SSD	State Security Department
SPA	Supreme People's Assembly
UFG	ULCHI FREEDOM GUARDIAN
UFD	United Front Department
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNC	United Nations Command
UNCMAC	United Nations Command Military Armistice Commission
UNCOK	United Nations Commission on Korea
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
USFK	U.S. Forces Korea
WMD	Weapons of Mass Destruction
WW II	World War II

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

*For the most part, North Korean policy has been mysterious. The only patterns that seem tolerably clear are that North Korea will do something provocative when it feels ignored or under serious economic strain, and that it will make commitments and keep them only as long as it takes to bilk the international community out of valuable resources.<sup>1</sup>*

- Joseph Nye, Jr., and David Welch

### 1.1 Introduction

This study seeks to explore the phenomenon of how North Korea continues to defy predictions that its end is near and survives despite the fall of the Soviet Union, death of its founder Kim Il-sung, and tightening of U.S.-led international sanctions. The purpose of this multiple-case study<sup>2</sup> is to examine the reigns of the three Kims (Kim Il-sung, Kim Jong-il, and Kim Jong-un) and determine how they have managed to survive over time. What the study reveals is that in most cases the Kims made rational choices and this revelation is important because as Joseph Nye, Jr., and David Welch noted, “It is impossible to know how best to deal with North Korea without having a sense of what North Korea wants and why it does what it does.”<sup>3</sup> I will use Nye’s smart power theory as an analytical tool<sup>4</sup> to divine the “erratic, unpredictable, and mysterious” behavior of the North Koreans<sup>5</sup> to reveal new insights about their decision-making, and ultimately offer an alternative explanation for how the regime persists. Whether Kim Jong-un succeeds in prolonging his regime or not has profound security and economic implications for Northeast Asia and

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph S. Nye, Jr., and David A. Welch, *Understanding Global Conflict and Cooperation: An Introduction to Theory and History*, 8<sup>th</sup> ed. (Boston, MA: Longman, 2011), p. 234.

<sup>2</sup> Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2003), p. 46.

<sup>3</sup> Nye and Welch, *Understanding Global Conflict and Cooperation*, p. 234.

<sup>4</sup> Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *The Future of Power* (New York: Public Affairs, 2011), p. 210. Nye argued that his smart power theory could be used as an analytical tool and is not only for examining how the U.S. wields power.

<sup>5</sup> Nye and Welch, *Understanding Global Conflict and Cooperation*, p. 234.

beyond. This chapter begins with an overview of the context and background to frame the research before focusing on the problem statement, the statement of purpose, and the related research questions. This chapter next explains my research approach and personal views regarding North Korea, as well as my assumptions for the study. It concludes with the rationale and significance of the research and defines key terminology used in the study.<sup>6</sup>

## 1.2 Background and Context

Arguably, since the end of the Korean War, the survivability of North Korea had not been in question until near the end of Kim Il-sung's rule. In fact, North Korea has claimed, "Since the first days of the country's division by foreign forces, the Workers' Party of Korea and the Government of the Republic have put forward the *Juche*-oriented policies for national reunification, reflecting the unanimous will and desire of the entire Korean people and exerted every sincere effort for their realization."<sup>7</sup> The result of the multi-case study supports North Korea's claim that Kim Il-sung did all he could to achieve reunification of the Korean Peninsula. However, since his death in July 1994, North Korea has often been characterized by some as a failing state<sup>8</sup> teetering on the verge of collapse.<sup>9</sup> Over 20 years ago, Ahn Byung-joon noted that, as Kim Jong-il was beginning to consolidate his power after the death of Kim Il-sung, his reign would be "short-lived."<sup>10</sup> Ahn reasoned that unless Kim Jong-il instituted political and economic reforms he would not survive. The country was almost in total isolation and its economy was on the brink of collapse. According to this

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<sup>6</sup> Linda Dale Bloomberg and Marie Volpe, *Completing Your Qualitative Dissertation: A Road Map From Beginning to End*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2012), p. 68. This thesis follows many of the organizational concepts recommended in this reference for chapters 1 to 3.

<sup>7</sup> *Reunification Program of the DPRK* (Pyongyang, Korea: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1982), p. 1.

<sup>8</sup> Hong Yung Lee, "North Korea in 2012: Kim Jong Un's Succession," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 53, No. 1 (January/February 2013), p. 177., and Nicholas Eberstadt, *The North Korean Economy: Between Crisis & Catastrophe* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2009), pp. 11-13.

<sup>9</sup> Suk Hi Kim, Terence Roehrig, and Bernhard Seliger, eds., *The Survival of North Korea: Essays on Strategy, Economics and International Relations* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2011), p. 1, and Nicholas Eberstadt, *The End of North Korea* (Washington, DC: American Enterprise Institute, 1999), p. 4.

<sup>10</sup> Ahn Byung-joon, "The Man Who Would Be Kim," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 73, No. 6 (November-December 1994), pp. 94-108.



view, unless Kim was willing to pursue economic liberalization and give up North Korea's nuclear weapons program, he would be doomed to fail.<sup>11</sup> However, Kim chose not to reform during his reign and somehow managed to survive until he suffered a heart attack at the age of 69.<sup>12</sup>

Kim Jong-il survived despite the fall of the Soviet Union, the death of Kim Il-sung,<sup>13</sup> tightening of U.S.-led international sanctions,<sup>14</sup> and penetration of information from the outside.<sup>15</sup> The prevailing explanations of how North Korea survived under Kim Jong-il arguably ranged from his father's guerrilla legacy,<sup>16</sup> foreign aid,<sup>17</sup> the China factor,<sup>18</sup> illicit activities,<sup>19</sup> nuclear deterrence,<sup>20</sup> and ideology<sup>21</sup> to the staying power of North Korea's totalitarian system.<sup>22</sup> In spite of these explanations, one poll of North Korea experts in 2014 indicated that about 70 percent of them believed Kim Jong-un's regime would collapse within 10 to 20 years.<sup>23</sup> Therefore, the fate of the Kim regime has gone back to the

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<sup>11</sup> Ahn, "The Man Who Would Be Kim," pp. 94-108.

<sup>12</sup> Lee, "North Korea in 2012," pp. 176-77.

<sup>13</sup> CIA Intelligence Report, "Exploring the Implications of Alternative North Korean End Games: Results from a Discussion Panel on Continuing Coexistence Between North and South Korea," January 21, 1998 (released March 2004), pp. 1-4.

<sup>14</sup> U.S. efforts to pressure Pyongyang are found in Juan C. Zarate, *Treasury's War: The Unleashing of a New Era of Financial Warfare* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2013).

<sup>15</sup> A useful discussion on how penetration of outside information could end North Korea is found in Melanie Kirkpatrick, *Escape from North Korea* (New York: Encounter Books, 2012), pp. 275-294.

<sup>16</sup> Han Hong-koo, "Wounded Nationalism: The Minsaengdan Incident and Kim Il Sung in Eastern Manchuria" (PhD diss., University of Washington, 1999), pp. 19 and 354.

<sup>17</sup> Marcus Noland, *Avoiding the Apocalypse, The Future of the Two Koreas* (Washington, DC: Institute for International Economics, June 2000), p. 10.

<sup>18</sup> Jinhwan Oh and Jiyong Ryu, "The Effectiveness of Economic Sanctions on North Korea, China's Vital Role," *The Korean Journal of Defense Analysis*, Vol. 23, No. 1, March 2011, pp. 120-123.

<sup>19</sup> Nicholas Eberstadt, "Why Hasn't North Korea Collapsed? Understanding the Recent Past, Thinking About the Future," in Young Whan Kihl and Hong Nack Kim, eds., *North Korea: The Politics of Survival* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2006), pp. 273-277.

<sup>20</sup> Jonathan D. Pollack, *No Exit: North Korea, Nuclear Weapons and International Security* (London, UK: Routledge, 2011), pp. 159-160.

<sup>21</sup> Charles K. Armstrong, "Ideological Introversion and Regime Survival, North Korea's 'Our-Style Socialism,'" in Martin K. Dimitrov, ed., *Why Communism Did Not Collapse: Understanding Authoritarian Regime Resilience in Asia and Europe* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 99.

<sup>22</sup> Patrick McEachern, "North Korea's Policy Process: Assessing Institutional Policy Preference," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 49, Issue 3, p. 528.

<sup>23</sup> Kim Sung-han, Korea Chair Platform, Center for Strategic and International Studies, *The Future of North Korea*, November 4, 2014, [http://csis.org/files/publication/141031\\_The\\_Future\\_of\\_north\\_korea.pdf](http://csis.org/files/publication/141031_The_Future_of_north_korea.pdf) (accessed November 17, 2014).

future. Another heir of the Kim Dynasty was doomed to fail because the experts still assume he must reform to survive. While that remains to be seen, Kim Jong-un continues to expand his nuclear weapons capabilities<sup>24</sup> as Presidents Barack Obama<sup>25</sup> and Park Geun-hye wait for North Korea to show its commitment to denuclearization.<sup>26</sup> Perhaps Kim's most shocking move since his assumption of power was the purge and execution of his uncle, Jang Song-thaek. The unusually transparent process of the purge that was visible to both North Koreans and the outside world seemed to signal Kim was ready to take charge in Pyongyang.<sup>27</sup> However, due to his youth and lack of leadership experience, it begs the question *how* will he survive? To address this question, this study examines how the Kim family has managed to survive in spite of the apparent weaknesses of the regime and U.S.-led international pressure.

### **1.3 Problem Statement**

The research reveals that for over 20 years many experts have predicted the end of North Korea, yet these predictions have not come to fruition. This has led to the development of several theories to explain how North Korea continues to survive. However, there is no consensus in the existing literature as to why North Korea continues to survive and many of these theories have lost their explanatory power while others remain speculative.

### **1.4 Statement of Purpose and Research Questions**

The purpose of this multiple-case study is to examine the rule of the three Kims to determine what tools were available to each of them to deal with domestic and external challenges, and to maintain control and ultimately to survive. To conduct the multi-case study, the following enabling (or supporting)

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<sup>24</sup> Alexandre Mansourov, "North Korea: Turning in the Wrong Direction," *Foreign Affairs*, April 10, 2013, <http://38north.org/2013/04/amansourov041013/> (accessed May 13, 2013).

<sup>25</sup> James Mann, *The Obamians: The Struggle Inside the White House to Redefine American Power* (New York: Penguin Group, 2012), pp. 196-198.

<sup>26</sup> Lee Sangsoo with Bernt Berger, "Park's 'Trustpolitik' Challenge," Institute for Security & Development Policy, Policy Brief No. 185, October 12, 2015, <http://www.isdp.eu/images/stories/isdp-main-pdf/2015-lee-berger-parks-trustpolitik-challenge.pdf> (accessed October 14, 2015).

<sup>27</sup> Emma Chanlett-Avery and Ian E. Rinehart, "North Korea: U.S. Relations, Nuclear Diplomacy, and Internal Situation," Congressional Research Service, January 15, 2014, p. 1.

research questions are derived from existing explanations of North Korean survival to direct attention to the issues that will be examined within the scope of this study.<sup>28</sup>

1. How relevant is Kim Il-sung's guerrilla experience to North Korea's survival?
2. Was Kim Jong-il capable of maintaining totalitarianism despite relative weakness?
3. What did the Kims learn from North Korea's economic failure following the Soviet collapse?
4. How critical is ideology to overcoming the regime's weakness and promoting unity?
5. Will nuclear weapons strengthen the regime or make it more vulnerable to external pressure?
6. Is North Korea exploiting China to strengthen its economy or is it dependent on China for survival?
7. Can North Korea under Kim Jong-un counter calls for a "North Korean spring" with its own ideas?

The propositions offered by these seven questions will be addressed in detail in Chapter 2 (Literature Review) and help to validate the research question regarding the alternative explanation presented by this study.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, the questions are not meant to conflate the Kims' leadership with the North Korean state. In this study, they are viewed as interchangeable since the key institutions of the state are controlled by the Kims as the study demonstrates in Chapters 4 to 7. As Bruce Cumings noted, "Kim Il Sung was not just the 'iron-willed, ever-victorious commander,' the 'respected and beloved Leader'; *he was also the 'head and heart' of the body politic, even 'the supreme brain of the nation* – a mantle now held by his son, Kim Jong Il."<sup>30</sup> Having said that, the primary research question is, given that there is no consensus on how North

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<sup>28</sup> Yin, *Case Study Research*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., p. 22.

<sup>29</sup> Yin, *Case Study Research*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., p. 22.

<sup>30</sup> Bruce Cumings, "Divided Korea: United Future?" Headline Series, *Foreign Policy Association*, No. 306 (Spring 1995), p. 54.

Korea survives and why it conducts provocations; *does the concept of smart power offer an alternative explanation for North Korea's resilience?*

### 1.5 Research Approach

With respect to academic disciplines, this study is a hybrid of historical study and international relations theory. In order to understand the Kims' thought process, one must first explore the past because it "is not a dead past, but a past which in some sense is still living in the present." As Edward Carr suggested, reconstituting the past by judiciously selecting and interpreting the empirical evidence will lead to understanding the thought that lay behind it.<sup>31</sup> Han Hong-koo agrees with Carr by saying, "In north Korea, history, in a sense, does not belong to the past, but governs the present." He went on to state, "History cannot explain everything, but at least in north Korea's case, unless we consider the history of the guerrilla movement in Manchuria, we can explain nothing."<sup>32</sup> Although this study is not a complete history of North Korea, it aims to understand its past and present by conducting the multi-case study from 1945 to 2015, and briefly examining what occurred from one case to the next.

The study also deals with the field of international relations (IR) as it attempts to understand the "inescapable link between the abstract world of theory and the real world of policy" with the application of smart power theory. According to Stephen Walt, realism accepts the fact that states are prone to conflict by using primarily economic and military instruments of power to protect their interests (e.g., the Cold War), while liberalism hopes for alternative solutions to resolve differences between states (e.g., economic interdependence, promotion of democracy, and use of international and multilateral organizations). On the other hand, idealism challenges realism and liberalism by suggesting that power of ideas can transform state relations. It focuses on the society's evolving "beliefs and interests," and "norms of behavior" to explain state behavior (e.g., Mikhail Gorbachev's embrace of new ideas to change Soviet foreign policy). In the end, Walt claims realism is the most

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<sup>31</sup> Edward Hallett Carr, *What is History? The George Macaulay Trevelyan Lectures Delivered at the University of Cambridge January-March 1961* (New York: Vintage Books, 1961), pp. 23-24.

<sup>32</sup> Han Hongkoo, "Wounded Nationalism," p. 23.

compelling one to understand state behavior but “a wise leader would also keep insights from the rival paradigms in mind.”<sup>33</sup>

While identifying which IR theory the Kims preferred is beyond the scope of this research, Walt may be correct to suggest that most states prefer realism (e.g., mentality of the Cold War still shapes North Korea’s world view) and sometimes acquiesce to other paradigms such as liberalism when necessary (e.g., Six-Party Talks (6PT) to address the nuclear issue). However, there is little evidence the Kims were prepared to embrace idealism beyond the primacy of nuclear deterrence and other “ideas” that they promoted (e.g., *Juche*, *Songun*, and *Byungjin*). What is also important is to recognize the fact that political leaders rely on strategies to guide their behavior in the international system.<sup>34</sup>

The aims of my research are to increase the level of understanding about how the Kims have managed to survive despite growing international pressure, to offer North Korea’s use of *smart power* strategy as an alternative explanation for its survival, and to offer policy recommendations to address the North Korea problem. My enabling objectives to achieve the aims are as follows:

- Clarify the role of Kim Il-sung’s guerrilla experience for the regime’s legitimacy
- Determine how Kim Il-sung established totalitarian control and whether it was sustainable
- Determine how North Korea survived the “arduous march” after the collapse of the Soviet Union and how it impacted its subsequent economic policies
- Examine *Juche* as an ideology and whether it remains a unifying ideology for the regime
- Examine whether North Korea’s growing nuclear weapons capability is a survival tool or a potential cause for U.S. intervention
- Determine whether China is the key to North Korea’s survival

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<sup>33</sup> Stephen M. Walt, “International Relations: One World, Many Theories,” *Foreign Policy*, No. 110 (Spring 1998), pp. 29-44.

<sup>34</sup> Harry R. Yarger, *Strategic Theory for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: The Little Book on Big Strategy*, Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, February 2006, p. 2.

- Examine whether Kim Jong-un can successfully lead North Korea to counter the invasion of information from the outside and the expansion of markets
- Conduct a multi-case study to determine whether North Korea's use of *smart power* can help explain North Korea's survival

In order to offer an alternative explanation of how North Korea continues to survive (smart power), I have applied Robert Yin's approach to case studies. He confirmed that the case study is "most likely to be appropriate for 'how' and 'why' questions," which meets the first requirement for this study. Furthermore, the primary and the seven enabling research questions will help guide the research toward the relevant information for this work.

Next, the unit of analysis is the three Kims and I have collected the relevant information for each of the Kims to form a multiple-case study. As discussed further in Chapter 3 (Methodology Chapter), to minimize case selection bias, I have selected more than a dozen cases of North Korean provocations (hard power), with the rationale that if the smart power theory is valid then the study can safely assume that, even in cases where North Korea appears to use only variations of force, closer examination is likely to reveal the Kims simultaneously employed other power resources to achieve their aims. That said, the three Kims as a unit of analysis are defined separately in Chapter 3, and data from subsequent chapters demonstrate that the examination of the collected information provided sufficient data for a multi-case study.<sup>35</sup>

In effect, the review of the literature provides an opportunity to conduct "pilot case studies"<sup>36</sup> of several issues to clarify the line of research questions and to help refine my data collection plan. Finally, the review revealed that the Kims (some better than others) are capable of successfully crafting and exercising smart power strategies to overcome their relative weaknesses in national power. However, it was also evident that what may be considered relative strengths today could quickly become weaknesses if the North Korean leadership is unable to correctly discern the critical factors for regime survival as

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<sup>35</sup> Yin, *Case Study Research*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., p. 22.

<sup>36</sup> Yin, *Case Study Research*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., pp. 78-79.

the domestic and international security environment continues to evolve. In short, Kim Jong-un must recognize that the same old tactics and lessons learned may not always work and be capable of developing new and successful strategies if his family is going to survive beyond the second dynastic transition.

Finally, the criteria for interpreting the issues resulting from the study's findings are those of Joseph Nye's smart power concept, which raises the following five questions to determine evidence of a smart power strategy:<sup>37</sup>

1. "What goals or outcomes are preferred?"
2. "Which forms of power behavior are most likely to succeed?"
3. "What resources are available and in which contexts?"
4. "What is the probability of success?"
5. "What are the positions and preferences of the targets of influence attempts?"<sup>38</sup>

Having said this, some skeptics are not convinced of the utility of "soft power" to achieve "specific policy objectives," especially when compared to traditional use of "hard power." According to Christopher Ford, the U.S. has prematurely embraced "soft power" after the George W. Bush administration with the belief that it "would complement residual 'hard power' capabilities and produce a hybrid, smugly termed 'smart power' that would transform American foreign policy and give the United States new clout and stature on the world stage." Ford criticized Nye for minimizing the role of hard power and overselling the impact of soft power in international affairs. He seemed to disparage the concept of soft power which some described as "movies, books, and songs; ideals, diplomacy, and moral authority – all about hearts and minds." Nevertheless, Ford admitted "soft power" had potential but argued it was harder for democracies to harness it since it lacked the ability to control it. In other words, authoritarian regimes like Beijing could wield soft power more effectively

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<sup>37</sup> Nye, *The Future of Power*, pp. 208-209.

<sup>38</sup> Nye, *The Future of Power*, pp. 208-209. The ordering of the five questions have changed from the order shown in Nye's book to accommodate an easier flow of the discussion related to the questions, and this sequence will remain throughout the paper.

than countries with “genuine political and economic freedoms.” There is evidence China has invested in the development of its soft power.

According to David Shambaugh, China has enhanced its economic and military power, but lacks soft power. Xi Jinping is apparently aware and declared, “We should increase China’s soft power; give a good Chinese narrative, and better communicate China’s messages to the world.” In order to enhance its soft power, China has invested over \$150 billion in its “soft-power ventures” and “pledged to invest \$1.25 trillion worldwide by 2025.” However, Shambaugh concluded that China has a long way to go before its global image improves largely due to its authoritarian political system.<sup>39</sup> Perhaps the most important claim by Ford is the statement, “If there is anything to the idea of a genuinely ‘smart’ approach to wielding power, *it surely involves emphasizing areas in which one possesses a relative advantage and de-emphasizing others.*”<sup>40</sup> This idea is essentially what Nye attempts to examine with his second smart power question.

Nye agrees with Ford that the Obama administration has embraced his concept of smart power since it assumed power in 2009. According to Nye, Obama seemed to embrace his theory when he stated, “Our power grows through its prudent use; our security emanates from the justness of our cause, the force of our example, the tempering qualities of humility and restraint.” Obama’s former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton was even more clear about the utility of Nye’s theory. She argued, “America cannot solve the most pressing problems on our own, and the world cannot solve them without America. We must use what has been called ‘smart power,’ the full range of tools at our disposal.”<sup>41</sup> She even proposed her own definition that “smart power meant choosing the right combination of tools – diplomatic, economic, military, political, legal, and cultural – for each situation.”<sup>42</sup> Moreover, former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates called for a significant increase in the State

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<sup>39</sup> David Shambaugh, “China’s Soft-Power Push: The Search for Respect,” *Foreign Affairs* (July/August 2015), pp. 99-100.

<sup>40</sup> Christopher A. Ford, “Soft on ‘Soft Power,’” *SAIS Review*, Vol. XXXII, No. 1 (Winter-Spring 2012), pp. 89-108.

<sup>41</sup> Nye, *The Future of Power*, p. ix.

<sup>42</sup> Hillary Rodham Clinton, *Hard Choices* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2014), p. 33.



Department's budget to promote diplomacy, economic aid, and strategic communications. Gates argued that the U.S. must increase its soft power capacity by highlighting the fact that the Defense Department's budget overshadowed that of the State Department by a factor of fourteen, \$500 billion vs. \$36 billion respectively. He was cautioning that to effectively wield smart power there needs to be a proper balance of soft and hard power resources.<sup>43</sup>

In short, even if one is a skeptic, smart power theory needs to be acknowledged as something more than a "catch-all phrase."<sup>44</sup> On the contrary, this discussion indicates that smart power theory has begun to move beyond "the abstract world of theory" and entered "the real world of policy." In fact, Juan Zarate argued that the U.S. has been exercising "smart financial power" since September 11, 2001. Instead of relying on government sanctions, this new paradigm persuades global financial networks to protect their own interests by denying access to "targeted actors" such as rogue regimes, criminal organizations, and terrorist groups. Zarate highlighted the Department of the Treasury's actions against Banco Delta Asia (BDA) to increase pressure on North Korea as one of the cases of smart financial power.<sup>45</sup>

As Nye cautioned, it is wrong to depict soft power "as 'non-traditional forces such as cultural and commercial goods'," and simply ignore it because it is "soft." Most importantly, Nye argued "smart power is available to all states (and non-state actors), not just [powerful states like] the United States."<sup>46</sup> He argued that rising states (e.g., Meiji Japan, Communist China under Deng Xiaoping, etc.) and smaller ones (e.g., Singapore, Qatar, Switzerland, etc.) were also effective in employing smart power strategies.<sup>47</sup> This begs the question whether the Kim regime of North Korea is capable of wielding smart power. More importantly, do the Kims possess the power of attraction and persuasion? How does Nye define them?

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<sup>43</sup> Nye, *The Future of Power*, p. ix.

<sup>44</sup> Mann, *The Obamians*, p. 55.

<sup>45</sup> Juan C. Zarate, "Harnessing the Financial Furies: Smart Financial Power and National Security," *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 32, No. 4 (October 2009), pp. 43-50.

<sup>46</sup> Nye, *The Future of Power*, pp. 22-23.

<sup>47</sup> Nye, *The Future of Power*, pp. 210-211.

According to Nye, “benignity, competence, and beauty (charisma)” produce “positive attraction.” Benignity is about how a state or an agent relates to others. When they are benign, it generates “sympathy, trust, credibility, and acquiescence.” When a state or agent is perceived as competent, it engenders “admiration, respect, and emulation.” Finally, charisma is related to how the agent is associated with “ideals, values, and vision, and it tends to produce inspiration and adherence.” The concept of charisma is discussed further in subsequent chapters as the study examines the Kims’ leadership capabilities and styles. These “clusters of qualities” are essential to producing attractive power behaviors. Ultimately, outcome depends on the qualities of the agent and how the targets of influence perceive the agent.<sup>48</sup>

With respect to the power of persuasion, Nye argued it “is closely related to attraction.” It is being able to influence “the beliefs and actions” of one’s target audience by the “use of argument” without the use of coercion. He also emphasized that persuasion “almost always involves some degree of manipulation.” This means one often highlights some points while deemphasizing others. In the end, the more rational the appeal, the more likely the argument is going to be persuasive, and the concept of attraction and persuasion are “closely related” with trust.<sup>49</sup> The evidence suggests the first two Kims demonstrated their ability to exercise at least few clusters of attractive and persuasive power; however, it remains to be seen whether Kim Jong-un can follow their lead in due course. For example, Kim Il-sung’s was able to attract huge amount of economic assistance from the Soviet bloc from the end of the Korean War to 1962,<sup>50</sup> and Kim Jong-il established “trust” with the Clinton administration during the late 1990s to elicit aid to survive.<sup>51</sup> Thus, this study suggests even a relatively weak rogue state like North Korea is capable of achieving its aims by using the key tenets of Nye’s smart power principles.

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<sup>48</sup> Nye, *The Future of Power*, p. 92.

<sup>49</sup> Nye, *The Future of Power*, pp. 21 and 93.

<sup>50</sup> Charles K. Armstrong, “‘Fraternal Socialism’: The International Reconstruction of North Korea, 1953-62,” *Cold War History*, Vol. 5, No. 2, May 2005, p. 165.

<sup>51</sup> Mike Chinoy, *Meltdown, The Inside Story of the North Korean Nuclear Crisis* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2008), pp. 22-26.

As a result, using Nye's smart power theory, I identified the outcomes of the cases (Question 1) and hard and soft power actions by North Korea (Question 2), examined the resources available (Question 3), attempted to assess the probability of success of its actions (Question 4), and determined the policy preferences of key actors (Question 5). Collecting the data for four of the questions was not very difficult, but Question 4 was more challenging in many cases due to the opaque nature of the North Korean leadership's decision-making process. Nevertheless, while observers may not always be able to assess Pyongyang's "probability of success," focusing on whether North Koreans "recognized their limits and rarely went beyond them" can help mitigate the problem.<sup>52</sup> Moreover, outcomes of different situations could also be used to assess the probability of success of subsequent events. In other words, North Korea may learn (and sometimes the wrong lessons) how to use smart power more effectively over time and gain more confidence of its positive outcome.

## 1.6 Assumptions

Upon review of the literature, the following assumptions were made for this study. These statements were what I held to be true as I initiated the study and they were validated through the course of the study, and led to one of the study's more important conclusions: The regime continues to highlight Kim Il-sung's anti-Japanese guerrilla legacy to wage its war of legitimacy against South Korea and to legitimize Kim family rule.

### **Assumptions:**

*Assumption 1: Kim Il-sung was born as Kim Song-ju but he was the man he claimed to be – an effective leader of a band of Korean guerrillas in Manchuria.*

*Assumption 2: Kim Il-sung joined the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) when he was in Manchuria and fought with the Chinese Communists, but he remained a pragmatic Korean nationalist.*

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<sup>52</sup> Mann, *The Obamians*, p. 229.

*Assumption 3: Kim Il-sung was not chosen as a Soviet puppet leader prior to Korean liberation from the Japanese, but he eventually benefited from Soviet support to become the “Supreme Leader” of North Korea.*

*Assumption 4: Kim Il-sung created a totalitarian state based on his cult of personality, but that alone cannot be the answer to why North Korea survives.*

*Assumption 5: There is some correlation between explanatory variables (i.e., survival tools) regarding North Korea’s survival and the regime’s use of smart power.*

*Assumption 6: The Kims and the North Korean state are considered the same since they exercise near complete control over North Korea’s core institutions.*

*Assumption 7: While the concept of abductive strategy used in this research cannot be proven scientifically, it can be applied as a hypothesis by using smart power theory to better understand North Korea’s behavior.*

## **1.7 The Researcher’s Background and Bias**

As a U.S. Army officer, I served several tours dealing with Korea issues from 1987 to 2011. While serving with the United Nations Command Military Armistice Commission (UNCMAC) in the late 1990s, I had an opportunity to work with a select group of Korean People’s Army (KPA) officers at Panmunjom. It was during this tour that I first realized they were often rational, highly skilled at negotiations, and even persuasive in achieving their outcomes. For example, one of the armistice maintenance incidents with which I had to deal with the KPA was the so-called “acorn incident.” KPA soldiers had kidnapped two farmers from Taesong-dong village near Panmunjom on October 16, 1997. It was later discovered that the two South Koreans were collecting acorns to make a gelatin-like side dish (*muk*) popular in South Korea. The evidence indicated that the two farmers had crossed the Military Demarcation Line (MDL) inadvertently and the KPA captured them to make a point. The KPA then proposed to conduct a joint investigation to resolve the issue, and the first joint investigation since 1976 took place within a short distance from Panmunjom. This development was a surprise since the KPA had been denouncing the legitimacy of the Armistice and the UNCMAC since the early 1990s. In the end,

the United Nations Command (UNC) agreed to the proposed farmers' declaration: "We accidentally crossed the Military Demarcation Line in an area that is not clearly marked."<sup>53</sup> It taught me that when the North Koreans believe they were "in the right," they are more than willing to defend their position and use the opportunity to make a point. In hindsight, this case made me realize my potential bias in believing that the North Koreans were capable of using smart power. I have sought to mitigate my bias through the use of a multi-case study approach, focusing on a series of provocations over time, which could prove the Kims have used a purely coercive strategy.

### **1.8 Research Rationale and Significance**

This study seeks to understand better the Kim regime and its domestic and external challenges. As Kim Jong-un solidifies control of the regime, whether he succeeds in further consolidating his power or eventually fails to overcome the "constellation of forces" against him will have profound security and economic implications for the Korean Peninsula and beyond. Not only does the study examine the nuclear and missile issues, it also demonstrates North Korea's seemingly erratic and unpredictable behavior is in fact a carefully crafted smart power strategy. In fact, this is the first study that applies Nye's smart power strategy holistically to demonstrate its utility as an analytical tool. Moreover, it validates Nye's theory can be used to examine other cases such as Iran and Russia (further discussed in Chapter 2). With respect to North Korea, the higher level of understanding of the Kim regimes' decision-making process revealed by the application of a smart power framework also assists in the formulation of policy options to resolve the North Korea issue (discussed in Chapter 8).

### **1.9 Definitions of Key Terminology**

As noted in Linda Dale Bloomberg and Marie Volpe's work, "This section provides the definitions of terminology used in the study that do not have a

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<sup>53</sup> Chuck Downs, *Over the Line: North Korea's Negotiating Strategy* (Washington, DC: The AEI Press, 1999), p. 266.

common meaning or those terms that have the possibility of being misunderstood.”<sup>54</sup> I will clarify how they will be used in this study.

**Smart Power:** Nye argues that smart power is the “ability to combine the hard power of coercion or payment with the soft power of attraction into a successful strategy.”<sup>55</sup> The essence of Nye’s concept is resolving the challenge of power conversion. This means actors involved must understand their “full range of power resources” and appreciate “the problems of combining them effectively in various contexts.”<sup>56</sup> The attainment of favorable outcomes also requires “contextual intelligence” to understand the evolving domestic and international situation to identify the right mix of hard and soft power to achieve desired outcomes.<sup>57</sup> The challenge for this study will be assessing the probability of success and demonstrating how the actors involved in the cases exerted their power to affect preferred outcomes, especially the soft power of attraction.

One could argue an actor like North Korea may not have “attractive” cultural or political values, but it is plausible that Pyongyang can periodically exercise effective foreign policies to exercise soft power.<sup>58</sup> While observers may not always be able to determine each of the actor’s calculus for the “probability of success,” one may be able to deduce it by identifying whether the actors “recognized their limits and rarely went beyond them.”<sup>59</sup> Moreover, their expression of power can be revealed by focusing on how they attempted to get the other side to abandon “their initial preferences and strategies,” or by framing and setting the agenda in such a way to shape the other side’s preferences. That said, one must not ignore the possibility that even North Korea may have attempted to shape the other’s “ideas and beliefs” so they aligned with its own

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<sup>54</sup> Bloomberg and Volpe, *Completing Your Qualitative Dissertation*, Second ed., p. 66.

<sup>55</sup> Joseph S. Nye, Jr., “The War on Soft Power,” *Foreign Policy*, April 12, 2011, [http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/04/12/the\\_war\\_on\\_soft\\_power](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/04/12/the_war_on_soft_power) (accessed June 12, 2014).

<sup>56</sup> Nye, *The Future of Power*, p. 23.

<sup>57</sup> Nye, *The Future of Power*, p. 212.

<sup>58</sup> Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Is The American Century Over?* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2015), p.

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<sup>59</sup> Nye, *The Future of Power*, p. 229.

preferences.<sup>60</sup> For instance, Kim Jong-il reportedly believed the U.S. could be easily persuaded as long as North Korea presented its policy positions “logically.”<sup>61</sup> However, this works only if North Korea follows through with its commitments, at least some of the time. The final step is to shift the focus to measuring their power by trying to determine the strength of the other’s “initial preferences,” and how much the actors managed to change them through their efforts.<sup>62</sup>

***Juche (or Chuche)***: While many scholars have simply used “self-reliance” to define *Juche*, Suh Jae-jung argues it is “best understood as subjecthood or being a master of one’s own fate.”<sup>63</sup> According to Michael Robinson, *Juche* derives its meaning from two Chinese characters that mean “subject” and “body.” When they are combined, they suggest the ideas of “autonomy” or “self-reliance.” Robinson argues that “in its most straightforward use, *Chuche* [or *Juche*] can denote one’s independence and autonomy from any external control or manipulation.” As a result, North Koreans generally operationalize the term to perceive their country as an “autonomous, independent, and self-reliant” nation. What this means is that, as a matter of honor, North Koreans will seek to defend it when they feel their honor has been “besmirched or denigrated.”<sup>64</sup> Bruce Cumings goes on to say that *Juche* “means self-reliance and independence in politics, economics, defense, and ideology.” However, he argued Kim Il-sung also used similar language such as “*chajusong* (self-reliance), *minjok tongnip* (national or ethnic independence), [and] *charip kyongjae* (independent economy).”<sup>65</sup>

According to Cumings, the antonym for all these terms is the concept of *sadaejuui*, “which means serving and relying upon foreign power.” When these

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<sup>60</sup> Nye, *The Future of Power*, pp. 10-15.

<sup>61</sup> Jang, Jin-sung, *Dear Leader, Poet, Spy, Escapee, A Look Inside North Korea* (New York: Atria Books, 2014), p. 253.

<sup>62</sup> Nye, *The Future of Power*, pp. 10-15.

<sup>63</sup> Jae-Jung Suh, ed., *Origins of North Korea’s Juche: Colonialism, War and Development* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2013), p. 2.

<sup>64</sup> Michael E. Robinson, *Korea’s Twentieth-Century Odyssey: A Short History* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2007), p. 159.

<sup>65</sup> Bruce Cumings, *Korea’s Place in the Sun: A Modern History* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1997), pp. 402-404.

terms are synthesized one realizes that what Kim Il-sung sought for the Korean people, who had been colonized by the Japanese for so long, was “basic dignity as human beings.” In the end, Cumings noted that the meaning of *Juche* “might best be translated as putting Korean things first, always: it suggests a type of nationalism.”<sup>66</sup> Kim Il-sung’s own biography claimed, *Juche* meant “doing everything in conformity with the actual conditions of our country, creatively applying the general principles of Marxism-Leninism plus the experiences of other countries to our own country in accordance with our actual conditions.” He also stressed while Marxist-Leninist principles were a guide, the Koreans had to solve their own problems and not depend on others to achieve the goals of the revolution.<sup>67</sup> Hence, I will accept “self-reliance,” an expression of Korean nationalism, and “being a master of one’s own fate” as the core principles of *Juche*.

***Suryong* (or Supreme Leader):** Suh Dae-sook noted that in the late 1960s North Korea began to use the term *Suryong*, which means the Supreme Leader, to describe Kim Il-sung. Until then, North Korea had apparently reserved the term for “such notables as Lenin and Stalin.” This elevation of Kim Il-sung’s status signaled the coming of his personality cult and North Korea’s adulation of Kim.<sup>68</sup> According to Bruce Cumings, the term *Suryong* comes from an old *Koguryo*<sup>69</sup> term that means “maximum leader.”<sup>70</sup> Lim Jae-cheon agreed with Suh that North Korea began to use the term consistently in the late 1960s but clarified that this occurred after Kim Il-sung purged the Kapsan group that

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<sup>66</sup> Cumings, *Korea’s Place in the Sun*, pp. 402-404.

<sup>67</sup> Baik Bong, *Kim Il Sung: Biography*, Volume [III] (Beirut, Lebanon: Dar Al-Talia, 1973), pp. 435-437.

<sup>68</sup> Suh Dae Sook, *Kim Il Sung: The North Korean Leader* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), pp. 197.

<sup>69</sup> Lim Jae-Cheon argues that in the early 1990s, North Korea rejuvenated the dynastic Korean history according to *Juche* themes. It constructed the tombs of King Tongmyong, founder of the Koguryo Dynasty in May 1993; King Wang Kon, founder of Koryo in February 1994; and Tangun, the mythical founder of Old Choson in October 1994. The Kim regime finally subsumed the rulers of the Korean dynasties into the *Juche* history. This is significant since the Kims had claimed that these rulers were whom North Korea had once deemed to be exploiters of the ruled were no longer the regimes enemies. They became the heroic ancestors of the *Juche* state. See Lim Jae-cheon’s *Kim Jong Il’s Leadership of North Korea*, p. 149.

<sup>70</sup> Cumings, *Korea’s Place in the Sun*, p. 30.



attempted to challenge his son's succession.<sup>71</sup> After the succession was completed between the two Kims, Kim Jong-il continued to be referred to as *Yongdoja* (a lower-grade term for leader), rather than *Suryong*.<sup>72</sup> This study will accept the term *Suryong* to mean the member of the Kim family that is the official ruler of North Korea.

**Military-First Policy (or *Songun*):** Ralph Hassig and Kongdan Oh argued that military-first policy replaced *Juche* as a core ideology in North Korea. They noted that "in the past, everything was supposed to be done in the *Juche* style... Now everything is to be done in the military way."<sup>73</sup> They also claimed that the origin of *Songun* is Kim Il-sung's Four Military Guidelines policy to deal with a "complex" international environment that was increasingly unfavorable to North Korea by the early 1960s. The new environment included the Soviet Union's more accommodating approach to the West after the death of Stalin, the Soviet-China dispute, and U.S. assertiveness in Southeast Asia. According to this view, Kim Jong-il may have sensed a similar period of "complexity" for North Korea as the Soviet Union collapsed, Russia and China both abandoned his regime for the South in the early 1990s, and the U.S. became the lone superpower in the world.<sup>74</sup>

I agree Kim Jong-il's *Songun* policy is similar to his father's ideas regarding military power. However, the idea's origin appears to be Park Chung-hee's military coup in May 1960. Kim Il-sung had argued that due to the growing threat from Park, he had to adopt the "equal emphasis policy," to develop the North's heavy industries as well as its defense capabilities (i.e., *Byungjin* line). This policy resulted in the declaration of Four Military Guidelines consisting of arming the entire population, fortifying the whole nation, creating a "cadre army," and modernizing all aspects of the military to achieve "self-

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<sup>71</sup> Lim Jae-cheon, *Kim Jong Il's Leadership of North Korea* (New York: Routledge, 2009), pp. 39-40.

<sup>72</sup> Cumings, *Korea's Place in the Sun*, p. 486.

<sup>73</sup> Ralph Hassig and Kongdan Oh, *The Hidden People of North Korea: Everyday Life in the Hermit Kingdom* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2009), p. 180.

<sup>74</sup> Hassig and Oh, *The Hidden People of North Korea*, pp. 178-179.

reliance in national defense.”<sup>75</sup> Therefore, Kim Il-sung’s “equal emphasis policy” or simultaneous development of the economy and defense was really meant to prioritize development of the military over the economy. This is the true meaning of Kim Jong-il’s *Songun* policy and why Kim Jong-un revealed on March 31, 2013, that he is attempting to revive his grandfather’s *Byungjin* policy.<sup>76</sup>

**Totalitarian Dictatorship:** The six traits of totalitarian dictatorships that are “universally acknowledged” were identified by Carl Friedrich and Zbigniew Brzezinski. First, they argued there is an official ideology that must be adhered to by all members of society, and it contained a belief in the creation of a utopian society and global domination.<sup>77</sup> They defined totalitarian ideology as “a reasonably coherent body of ideas concerning practical means of how totally to change and reconstruct a society by force, or violence, based upon an all-inclusive or total criticism of what is wrong with an existing or antecedent society.” When fully achieved at some point in the future, totalitarian ideologies become a “weapon” for action to fulfill a promise to deliver “utopia,” and thus were more radical-style of development that were absent in old-style conventional societies.<sup>78</sup>

Second, there is a single mass party consisting of a “hard core” elite that is completely dedicated to the ideology, and led by the dictatorial leader. They also emphasized that the party is both “hierarchically” and “oligarchically” organized and is normally superior to or completely integrated with the state bureaucracy.<sup>79</sup> This party organization is the “mainstay” of the totalitarian

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<sup>75</sup> James F. Person, “The Cuban Missile Crisis and the Origins of North Korea’s Policy of Self-Reliance in National Defense,” North Korea International Documentation Project, E-Dossier #12, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, October 2012, p. 3.

<sup>76</sup> KCNA, “New Strategic Line, Succession of Line of Simultaneously Developing Economy and Defense,” April 1, 2013, <http://www.kcna.us/2013/04/02/news-27/> (accessed September 26, 2015).

<sup>77</sup> Carl J. Friedrich and Zbigniew K. Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger Publisher, 1964), pp. 9-10.

<sup>78</sup> Friedrich and Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, pp. 72-75. They define ideology as a “reasonably coherent body of ideas concerning practical means of how to change and reform a society, based upon a more or less elaborate criticism of what is wrong with the existing, or antecedent, society.”

<sup>79</sup> Friedrich and Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, pp. 9-10.

system and the leader could not survive without its support. Its members were fanatically devoted to the leader like lemmings but were determined to impose their will on the masses on behalf of the leader “to shape the society in its image.”<sup>80</sup> One problem that persisted in solidifying the totalitarian leadership was the issue of succession as the paramount leader eventually succumbed to “the way of all flesh.”<sup>81</sup> The process of succession likely resulted in a five phased struggle. It begins with the designated successor assuming the mantle but he would soon be challenged by others in the inner circle to accept a “collective leadership” arrangement. This arrangement would not last long before a power struggle occurs amongst the core leadership and some of the members will be eventually be “removed” and reshuffling would also occur before two dominant figures will vie for power. Ultimately, the one that controls the key personnel and institutions of power will become the successor.<sup>82</sup>

Third, there was “terroristic police control” that simultaneously supported and supervised the party, and terrorized both the opposition and the entire population at random.<sup>83</sup> The opposition is targeted by the secret police because the vestiges of the old regime still threatened the masses and the totalitarian system. This struggle with the opposition was permanent and intensified even after regime consolidation of power. While totalitarians claimed some of the “enemies of the people” can be “re-educated,” but in reality, they were viewed as hopeless and exterminated in mass.<sup>84</sup> This terror originated from the totalitarian movement’s aim to achieve “total change” of society. As old enemies were eliminated, others were discovered and the terror permeated through all elements of society. The terror became the “vital nerve” of the system, and they justified it by demanding “unanimity” from the masses to deceive themselves into thinking there was collective support for their actions.<sup>85</sup> In short, complete loyalty was expected from the masses and those that were

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<sup>80</sup> Friedrich and Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, pp. 38-39.

<sup>81</sup> Friedrich and Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, p. 48.

<sup>82</sup> Friedrich and Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, pp. 50-51.

<sup>83</sup> Friedrich and Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, pp. 9-10.

<sup>84</sup> Friedrich and Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, pp. 140-141.

<sup>85</sup> Friedrich and Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, pp. 130-137.

regarded as disloyal were either exterminated or isolated.<sup>86</sup> If the disloyal were not executed, they were condemned to rot at the concentration camps, which is another unique characteristic of totalitarianism. These camps varied from the “mildest” labor camps to the worst “bone-mills.”<sup>87</sup> Moreover, even the party elites were vulnerable to regular purges by the secret police to strengthen the party and eliminate any potential alternatives to the leader.<sup>88</sup> Similar to regime’s desire for “unanimity,” confessions were used along with the purges to educate the masses and train the secret police.<sup>89</sup>

Fourth and fifth, the party and its key members had near monopoly control of “mass communication,” and “all means of effective armed combat.”<sup>90</sup> The total control of mass communication is another prominent feature of totalitarian dictatorship, which set it apart from traditional forms of despotic rule. However, the control over the content of communications (e.g., propaganda) was not unique to totalitarian dictatorships. While many assume propaganda is essentially about lies, “no propagandist worth his mettle will prefer an untruth to a truth if the truth will do the job.”<sup>91</sup> The job for totalitarian propaganda was to persuade the masses to act a certain way to achieve the regime’s goals,<sup>92</sup> which was to seize power and extend it over all aspects of society.<sup>93</sup> Nevertheless, totalitarian propaganda resulted in “rumor-mongering” because the masses sooner or later lost faith in all information promulgated by the regime.<sup>94</sup> What is surprising is that the regime knew of this “vacuum” created by the separation of the masses from the leader, and there is some indication

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<sup>86</sup> Friedrich and Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, pp. 130-137.

<sup>87</sup> Friedrich and Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, p. 161.

<sup>88</sup> Friedrich and Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, pp. 153-155.

<sup>89</sup> Friedrich and Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, pp. 160-161.

<sup>90</sup> Friedrich and Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, pp. 9-10. The concept of “all means of effective combat,” will be interpreted as primarily the KPA. The study recognizes that there are other armed elements such as the various intelligence and security services that are capable of conducting low intensity conflict but they will be covered under the context of the secret police. Other elements such as the Reconnaissance Bureau that is under the direct control of the National Defense Commission will be discussed separately when necessary.

<sup>91</sup> Friedrich and Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, p. 108.

<sup>92</sup> Friedrich and Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, pp. 107-109.

<sup>93</sup> Friedrich and Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, p. 130.

<sup>94</sup> Friedrich and Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, pp. 110-115.

that accurate reporting of public sentiment by the secret police may even have resulted in policy changes.<sup>95</sup>

On the other hand, constant repetition of propaganda with its targeted word usage unconsciously inculcated the masses to adopt the value judgments promoted by the regime. In other words, without access to reliable information, it dehumanized “the subjects of the regime by depriving them of a chance for independent thought and judgment.”<sup>96</sup> Perhaps the one segment of the population that the regime could ill afford to “dehumanize” was the army, especially if the prospects of war were real. Properly trained military officers were essential to national defense but they were not trusted by the regime, and a tripartite system of military political commissars, secret police, and party cells within the army ensured the Army remained a loyal part of the system.<sup>97</sup>

Finally, totalitarian regimes pursued “central control” of the whole economy.<sup>98</sup> The intent was to regain control of the means of production from capitalist exploiters,<sup>99</sup> and not surprisingly, one of their rallying cries was “expropriation of the exploiters.”<sup>100</sup> However, the management of the whole economy required a huge number of public officials, both from the state and party bureaucracies. The initial problem was recruitment of qualified bureaucrats and some compromise with the old system’s bureaucrats was tolerated until the new regime was able to replace them with their own “trusted” state officials. What they ended up with is a parallel structure of party and state bureaucracies which some described as “total bureaucratization” of almost all organizations within the totalitarian system. This resulted in rising tensions between the state and party officials as the party attempted to control the economy. As the totalitarian movement matured, the party bureaucrats and sympathizers successfully penetrated the state organizations and party loyalty replaced “professional qualification for office.” The totalitarian leader was still not satisfied. The system of “cross-espionage and the institutionalization of

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<sup>95</sup> Friedrich and Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, pp. 110-115.

<sup>96</sup> Friedrich and Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, pp. 115-117.

<sup>97</sup> Friedrich and Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, pp. 276-281.

<sup>98</sup> Friedrich and Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, pp. 9-10.

<sup>99</sup> Friedrich and Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, pp. 191-192.

<sup>100</sup> Friedrich and Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, p. 177.

mutual suspicion” kept constant observation and surveillance using the secret police and other party organs to ensure political reliability of state bureaucrats.<sup>101</sup> In sum, I accept these six traits of totalitarianism as I proceed to examine in greater detail the political systems of the three Kims in Chapters 4 to 7.

**Provocation:** As the study will examine many cases to determine whether or not the Kims employed smart power to survive, and many of them will be characterized as provocations, it also needs to be defined. Hannah Fischer defined *provocation* as an “armed invasion; border violations; infiltration of armed saboteurs and spies; hijacking; kidnapping; terrorism (including assassination and bombing); threat/intimidation against political leaders, media personnel, and institutions; incitement aimed at the overthrow of the South Korean government; actions undertaken to impede progress in major negotiations; and tests of ballistic missiles and nuclear weapons.” However, she did not include North Korean illicit activities and “political and other extrajudicial killing.”<sup>102</sup> On the other hand, the Center for Strategic and International Studies only focused on provocations that resulted in casualties which included “*major* armed conflicts, military/espionage incursions, border infractions, [and] acts of terrorism.” As a result, it omitted North Korean verbal rhetoric, kidnappings, and missile launches and nuclear tests.<sup>103</sup> Since the concept of smart power includes the application of soft and hard power, this study’s definition will be more inclusive and include all of these activities identified in both of these studies.

## 1.10 Structure of the Thesis

The study consists of a total of eight chapters, including Chapter 1, “Introduction.” Chapter 2, “Literature Review and the Conceptual Framework,” examines the existing literature to identify the research problem and questions,

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<sup>101</sup> Friedrich and Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, pp. 177-182.

<sup>102</sup> Hannah Fischer, “North Korean Provocative Actions, 1950-2007,” Congressional Research Service, April 20, 2007, p. CRS-1.

<sup>103</sup> Office of the Korea Chair, “Record of North Korea’s Major Conventional Provocations since 1960s,” Center for Strategic and International Studies, May 25, 2010, p. 1.

considers the plausibility of North Korea's use of smart power, and describes the conceptual framework. Chapter 3 explains the "multi-case study" methodology, research design, limitations, and the analytical framework for testing the hypotheses. Chapter 4 examines the rise of Kim Il-sung as a Korean leader in Manchuria, how he consolidated his power in North Korea, set the conditions for forced reunification, and laid the foundation for regime survival. Chapter 5 initiates the first multi-case study of North Korean provocations that begins with the Korean War. It examines whether Kim Il-sung successfully used smart power strategies to achieve reunification before and during the Korean War, and provides the historical context for the provocations that came after the war. Chapter 6 examines how Kim Jong-il applied what he learned over two decades as his father's successor and used effective smart power strategies to survive, and Chapter 7 considers if an inexperienced Kim Jong-un is capable of using smart power strategies despite a truncated grooming period. Finally, Chapter 8 provides the study's findings, overall analysis, policy recommendations, and questions for additional research to apply Nye's smart power theory.

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## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

*The DPRK continues to function as a state...Yet at the same time, one can also say that the North Korean project, in some profound and meaningful senses, has already come to an end.*<sup>104</sup>

- Nicholas Eberstadt

#### 2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I aim to identify, examine and critique the existing literature regarding the discourse over North Korea's possible collapse. The intent is to provide a clear and balanced view of the various arguments regarding the prospects for the Kim regime's survival. This review should underscore the rationale for North Korea's use of smart power, which forms the foundation of this work. Next, based on the review of the literature regarding the various explanations of North Korea's survival, section 2.3 presents the research problem and question. I will then provide the rationale for Pyongyang's instinctive use of Smart power and the conceptual framework that will be used in this study in sections 2.4 and 2.5, respectively.

#### 2.2 The Literature Review: Identifying the Research Problem

The review indicates that there is wide variance in the literature concerning the prospects for North Korean collapse and why it continues to defy all predictions that the end of the Kim regime is near. However, none of the arguments thus far has attempted to examine this issue from a smart power perspective. This needs to be explored since there is no definitive explanation for North Korea's survival, or how a relatively weak and isolated power like it not only survives but has not given up on its own style of socialism.<sup>105</sup> Moreover, it has become a de facto nuclear weapons state, despite proliferating nuclear

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<sup>104</sup> Nicholas Eberstadt, *The End of North Korea* (Washington, DC: American Enterprise Institute, 1999), p. 4.

<sup>105</sup> Armstrong, "Ideological Introversion and Regime Survival," pp. 99-119.

weapons technology to Syria.<sup>106</sup> This is a significant accomplishment for North Korea since proliferation of nuclear weapons technology has long been a declared U.S. “redline.”<sup>107</sup> The question is can North Korea still keep the U.S. and the international community at bay while it continues to expand its nuclear weapons programs? This section will explore this question and also synthesize the existing literature on North Korea’s collapse, identify the important issues that may not have been sufficiently addressed and, most importantly, validate the research question.

I will begin by examining the origin of the collapsist argument that rests on the presumed correlation between North Korea’s economic failure and regime collapse. I will then consider the role of Pyongyang’s illicit activities, growth of foreign aid, and potential of economic reform in its survival. Next, I will examine the China factor in North Korea’s survival as well as its reliance on nuclear weapons. This is followed by examining the totalitarian explanation of how the regime survives. Once the review of totalitarianism is completed, I will consider the role of Pyongyang’s *Juche* ideology<sup>108</sup> in sustaining the regime as more information penetrates its borders. After examining the diverse explanations for North Korea’s survival, I will review several explanations for why Pyongyang conducts provocations or hostile foreign policy activities. Finally, I offer the rationale for North Korea’s use of smart power.

### **2.2.1 Origins of Scholarship Regarding the End of North Korea**

In June 1990, Nicholas Eberstadt published an essay titled, “The Coming Collapse of North Korea,” and began to focus his work on the sustainability of North Korea’s political and economic systems.<sup>109</sup> General Gary Luck, then-Commander of U.S. Forces in Korea, forecasted in 1997 that “North Korea

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<sup>106</sup> Gregory J. Moore, ed., *North Korean Nuclear Operationality: Regional Security & Nonproliferation* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014), p. ix.

<sup>107</sup> Daniel Byman and Jennifer Lind, “Pyongyang’s Survival Strategy: Tools of Authoritarian Control in North Korea,” *International Security*, Vol. 35, No. 1 (Summer 2010), p. 71.

<sup>108</sup> Armstrong, “Ideological Introversion and Regime Survival,” pp. 99-119.

<sup>109</sup> Nicholas Eberstadt, “Why Hasn’t North Korea Collapsed?: Understanding the Recent Past, Thinking About the Future,” in *North Korea: The Politics of Regime Survival* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2006), edited by Young Whan Kihl and Hong Nack Kim, p. 273.

would ‘disintegrate.’”<sup>110</sup> The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) was also interested in the future prospects of North Korea. The Agency sponsored a conference in January 1998 to discuss alternative futures for North Korea. While the participants of the conference recognized that several factors could prolong North Korea’s survival, there was consensus that Kim Jong-il’s regime would not survive more than five years.<sup>111</sup> Finally, as a visiting scholar at the American Enterprise Institute, Eberstadt boldly predicted the end of North Korea in 1999 with his aptly titled book, *The End of North Korea*. Eberstadt argued that North Korea had lost its *raison d’être* since it was no longer capable of reunifying the peninsula or provide for its people. Some Chinese observers also began to spread the word in May 1994, just before the death of Kim Il-sung, that North Korea was suffering “the worst food crisis in history.”<sup>112</sup> Subsequently, more stories surfaced about people migrating to Pyongyang from the periphery to scrounge for food, with hundreds of people dying due to the spread of deadly disease. Some observers estimated the eventual death toll from this period of economic suffering at about three million.<sup>113</sup> To make matters worse, North Korea’s major ally, the Soviet Union, suddenly collapsed in 1991, and that seemed to put North Korea on notice that its very survival was at stake.<sup>114</sup>

After carefully citing speeches by Kim Jong-il in the 1990s, Eberstadt concluded that the serious economic reforms required to rejuvenate the economy were unlikely since it would mean the loss of Kim’s control over the economy.<sup>115</sup> More importantly, Kim was afraid it would contaminate North Korean society and threaten his regime.<sup>116</sup> Therefore, Eberstadt argued there was good reason for Kim to forgo economic reform and accept the risk of further economic decline. In short, Kim was rational and probably knew how to fix the

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<sup>110</sup> Byman and Lind, “Pyongyang’s Survival Strategy,” p. 44.

<sup>111</sup> CIA Intelligence Report, “Exploring the Implications of Alternative North Korean End Games: Results from a discussion panel on continuing coexistence between North and South Korea,” January 21, 1998, (Approved for release March 2004), pp. 1-4.

<sup>112</sup> Eberstadt, *The End of North Korea*, p. 46.

<sup>113</sup> Eberstadt, *The End of North Korea*, p. 46.

<sup>114</sup> Eberstadt, *The End of North Korea*, pp. 4-7.

<sup>115</sup> Eberstadt, *The End of North Korea*, p. 13.

<sup>116</sup> Eberstadt, *The End of North Korea*, p. 13.

economy, but he chose not to risk domestic instability by opening up the economy.<sup>117</sup> In January 2011, Kim Jong-nam, Kim Jong-il's oldest son, observed that "there is a fear that economic reforms and openness will lead to the collapse of the present system."<sup>118</sup> There seemed to be little doubt that North Korean leaders understood that their own lives would be at risk if they implemented reforms.<sup>119</sup> As a result, viewed from this elite perspective, the current strategy of economic isolation has been a great success as they live a relatively privileged life, while most of their counterparts in other communist countries were ousted long ago.<sup>120</sup>

How then did North Korea survive without economic reform? What did the Kims learn from economic failure following the collapse of the Soviet Union? Eberstadt speculated that North Korea continued to survive, during and after the Cold War, by extracting favorable aid from the international community. During the Cold War, the aid by and large came from the Soviet Union, China and Eastern Europe, but during the post-Cold War period the North Koreans also began to court aid from the West.<sup>121</sup> According to Eberstadt, North Korea was able to dictate the conditions for aid through "military extortion."<sup>122</sup> Marcus Noland agreed with Eberstadt and wrote, "The threat that North Korea poses is its sole asset"<sup>123</sup> in extracting external aid.<sup>124</sup> This meant North Korea had to remain a credible security threat to sustain itself, and this essentially became its new economic strategy.<sup>125</sup> This being the case, Eberstadt asked the question, why does the international community appease North Korea?

Eberstadt initially suggested "the governments with which North Korea today contends are, in the main, weak ones."<sup>126</sup> This is difficult to accept, even

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<sup>117</sup> Eberstadt, *The End of North Korea*, pp. 13-14.

<sup>118</sup> Andrei Lankov, *The Real North Korea: Life and Politics in the Failed Stalinist Utopia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 117.

<sup>119</sup> Lankov, *The Real North Korea*, p. 117.

<sup>120</sup> Lankov, *The Real North Korea*, p. 117.

<sup>121</sup> Eberstadt, *The End of North Korea*, p.19

<sup>122</sup> Eberstadt, *The End of North Korea*, p.19

<sup>123</sup> Noland, *Avoiding the Apocalypse*, p. 10.

<sup>124</sup> Noland, *Avoiding the Apocalypse*, p. 10.

<sup>125</sup> Eberstadt, *The End of North Korea*, p.19

<sup>126</sup> Eberstadt, *The End of North Korea*, pp. 22-23.

if Eberstadt claimed he was being a bit cynical,<sup>127</sup> since by almost any measure North Korea is weaker<sup>128</sup> than any of the powers in Northeast Asia.<sup>129</sup> The reality is, as of 2010, North Korea was on par with Ghana. Both had about 24.5 million people and their GDP were \$1,800 and \$1,700, respectively.<sup>130</sup> Nevertheless, Eberstadt went on to say one reason why these powers appeared weak was that in the 1990s, governments in Beijing, Tokyo, Moscow, Seoul, and Washington were all incapable of marshaling the means necessary to impose their will globally.<sup>131</sup> They either focused more on domestic priorities or were less motivated to pay attention to what he called “nonimmediate problems,”<sup>132</sup> and in some cases, he argued all of these factors applied.<sup>133</sup> This eventually led them to settle for policies that ended up shielding the North Korean regime from collapse.<sup>134</sup> I would agree with Andrei Lankov and offer another explanation. North Korea was effectively using smart power despite its relative weakness to punch well above its weight to garner international attention and manipulate the major powers to extract huge amounts of aid.<sup>135</sup> However, what if the aid eventually ceased after recurring North Korean provocations?

From 1995 to 1998, North Korea received \$352 million in aid from South Korea, \$349 million from the UN, and almost \$300 million from NGOs and other countries. In total, it is estimated that North Korea received over \$2.3 billion in

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<sup>127</sup> Eberstadt, *The End of North Korea*, p. 22.

<sup>128</sup> According to Jeffery Record's *Beating Goliath: Why Insurgencies Win*, a strong state is defined as “the side with greater material resources at its disposal,” such as “numerical superiority in population, territory, industrial resources, financial power, and conventional military forces, especially firepower.” The stronger state often has technological advantage as well. All things being equal, the stronger power usually beats the weaker one. (see *Beating Goliath: Why Insurgencies Win* (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, Inc., 2007), p. viii).

<sup>129</sup> North Korea was ranked 23 in the 2013 Failed States Index and the next country in Northeast Asia that shows up on the list is China at 66. Failed States Index 2013, <http://ffp.statesindex.org/rankings-2013-sortable> (accessed 5 January 2014).

<sup>130</sup> Lankov, *The Real North Korea*, pp. 150-151. According to Stephen Adei, former Rector of Ghana Institute of Management Studies, “Ghana is a middle income country with low income characteristics. See Adei article at <http://www.modernghana.com/news/463127/1/ghana-a-middle-income-country-with-low-income-char.html>.

<sup>131</sup> Eberstadt, *The End of North Korea*, p. 23.

<sup>132</sup> Eberstadt, *The End of North Korea*, p. 23.

<sup>133</sup> Eberstadt, *The End of North Korea*, p. 23.

<sup>134</sup> Eberstadt, *The End of North Korea*, pp. 22-23.

<sup>135</sup> Lankov, *The Real North Korea*, p. 151.

foreign aid from the mid-1990s to early 2000s.<sup>136</sup> According to Lankov, the U.S. initially agreed to provide part of this generous aid because it wrongly assumed North Korea would not survive and thus its “promised aid and concessions would not need to be delivered.”<sup>137</sup> The problem was that North Korea was simply using the aid to bolster its military first-oriented economy. Instead of using the generous foreign aid to rebuild its economy, Pyongyang continued to divert its limited resources to build up its military and called on the people to tighten their belts and simply work harder.<sup>138</sup> This was another rational decision since the North Korean leadership could afford to lose some of its people, particularly those that it considered to be disloyal. However, as part of its survival strategy it had to co-opt the military and the security services, and those loyal citizens that were totally committed to the regime.<sup>139</sup> It took a while but the international community eventually figured this out and North Korea would have to find another strategy to sustain the regime.

Victor Cha observed that North Korean intransigence eventually led to donor fatigue in 2002 and Western aid donations began to dry up. By 2005, only China and South Korea were giving aid to North Korea.<sup>140</sup> The U.S. provided only 0.57 million metric tons of food aid from 2002 to 2007, and most other countries also ceased to provide food aid.<sup>141</sup> According to Patrick McEachern, the situation got worse for North Korea, as South Korean aid was also decreased significantly when Lee Myong-bak became President in February 2008. South Korea offered only \$7 million worth of humanitarian assistance in early 2008, whereas the previous two South Korean administrations offered an economic package worth about \$11 billion.<sup>142</sup> It was now clear the aid situation had changed for the worse for North Korea. It was no longer able to dictate the conditions for aid. The prevailing idea that Kim

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<sup>136</sup> Victor Cha, *The Impossible State: North Korea, Past and Future* (New York: HarperCollins, 2012), p. 126.

<sup>137</sup> Lankov, *The Real North Korea*, p. 151.

<sup>138</sup> Cha, *The Impossible State*, p. 126.

<sup>139</sup> Lankov, *The Real North Korea*, p. 117.

<sup>140</sup> Cha, *The Impossible State*, pp. 126-127.

<sup>141</sup> Lankov, *The Real North Korea*, p. 164.

<sup>142</sup> Patrick McEachern, *Inside The Red Box: North Korea's Post-Totalitarian Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), pp. 202-205.

Jong-il could simply extort aid with threats no longer seemed valid. There was a clear limit to the generosity of international donors, and external factors such as the change of administration in South Korea also affected North Korea's strategy. If the economic strategy of extortion had failed and Kim was also unwilling to reform the economy, what was his next strategy for survival? Eberstadt and others offered more explanations for its survival.

### **2.2.2 North Korean Illicit Activities and Economic Reform**

By 2006, North Korea observers noticed there were no credible indications that the country was about to collapse and questions were intensifying about Eberstadt's earlier prediction regarding the end of North Korea. He responded by writing that, by early 2004, the economic situation in North Korea seemed to have improved and the famine appeared to have ended by the early 2000s.<sup>143</sup> Eberstadt attributed part of the improvement of the economy to funds obtained from North Korea's illicit activities (e.g., counterfeiting of U.S. dollar bills, drug and weapons trafficking).<sup>144</sup> A Congressional Research Service (CRS) study in 2008 estimated that a conservative estimate of North Korean illicit activities indicated the regime was generating up to \$500 million a year but the growth potential seemed to be trending downward.<sup>145</sup> A subsequent CRS study in 2013 concluded that, while North Korea was still involved in illicit activities, the magnitude of these activities had fallen since the 2000s.<sup>146</sup> Furthermore, Lankov even suggested that it may be a mistake to exaggerate North Korea's illegal activities since only a small amount of its funds come from illegal activities.<sup>147</sup> While some of the illicit funding is still being used to buy the loyalty of the regime's elite and to subsidize elements of its weapons development programs, it no longer seems to be a

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<sup>143</sup> Eberstadt, "Why Hasn't North Korea Collapsed?," p. 274.

<sup>144</sup> Eberstadt, "Why Hasn't North Korea Collapsed?," p. 277.

<sup>145</sup> Liana Sun Wyler and Dick K. Nanto, "North Korean Crime-for-Profit Activities," Congressional Research Service, August 25, 2008, p. summary page.

<sup>146</sup> Emma Chanlett-Avery and Ian E. Rinehart, "North Korea: U.S. Relations, Nuclear Diplomacy, and Internal Situation," Congressional Research Service, September 13, 2013, p. 22.

<sup>147</sup> Lankov, *The Real North Korea*, p. 154.

major factor in regime survival.<sup>148</sup> This may be due to increased international law enforcement efforts to target these activities, or North Korea could have found other sources of funding.

John Park has suggested there was another alternative for the regime to raise the funds it needed to survive. Park emphasized that North Korea's core institutions (i.e., state, Cabinet and the army) all ran their respective trading businesses, mostly to facilitate the North Korea-China trade. These trading activities helped fund North Korea's state operating budget, and ensured elite loyalty to the Kim regime through the provision of luxury goods. Park argues that these funds essentially became a useful "coping mechanism"<sup>149</sup> for Kim Jong-il as external pressure increased due to North Korean provocations.<sup>150</sup> Park's initial appraisal of these North Korean state trading companies suggests they are a more sustainable source of funding for the Kim regime. Park highlights these trading activities are growing "into a more vital commercial enabler for both the Kim Jong-il regime and the DPRK [or North Korea] state structure."<sup>151</sup> Even though these embryonic state trading activities at the time were insufficient to influence countrywide economic reform, they offered the Kims "flexible means for engaging in the closest form of 'normal' commerce that North Korea has with another country."<sup>152</sup>

On the other hand, the regime also had to deal with the growing threat of marketization of the domestic economy resulting from the people's own coping mechanisms developed during the economic crisis. What this implies is that it was wrong to assume foreign aid alone allowed North Korea to survive.<sup>153</sup> North Korean leaders again proved they were rational and pragmatic during the famine years. They understood that if the people did not want to starve to death due to the breakdown of the Public Distribution System (PDS), they had no

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<sup>148</sup> Liana Sun, Wyler Emma and Dick K. Nanto, "North Korean Crime-for-Profit Activities," p. summary page.

<sup>149</sup> John S. Park, "North Korea, Inc.: Gaining Insights into North Korean Regime Stability from Recent Commercial Activities," USIP Working Paper (Washington, DC: USIP Press, May 2009), p. 18.

<sup>150</sup> Park, "North Korea, Inc.," p. 18.

<sup>151</sup> Park, "North Korea, Inc.," p. 16.

<sup>152</sup> Park, "North Korea, Inc.," p. 12.

<sup>153</sup> Lankov, *The Real North Korea*, p. 121.



choice but to ignore the rules and become an active participant in the emergence of “capitalism from below.”<sup>154</sup> While North Korea’s leaders may still believe in their own style of socialism, they knew that resorting to the use of force to shut down the markets would eventually threaten the regime.<sup>155</sup> North Korean leadership overlooked the loss of command of the economy because it was riskier to forcibly shut down the markets. They may have assumed that as soon as the economic crisis was over they could roll back spread of markets.<sup>156</sup> This policy was acceptable to the state during the famine years and that allowed the people to violate the rules so they could survive that period.

Lankov argues that by 2002 the majority of North Koreans were making a living through some kind of market activity, which was and still is illegal.<sup>157</sup> The implication seems to be that, while state trading activities alone are insufficient to influence country-wide economic reform, the ubiquitous nature of these markets could have a lasting impact on the North Korean economy from below. Eberstadt later acknowledged there were some indications of “a new way of thinking”<sup>158</sup> in the early 2000s,<sup>159</sup> but argued North Korea was not implementing true reforms.<sup>160</sup> Lankov agreed and stated that, as conditions improved, the Kim regime attempted to “revive the pre-crisis system.”<sup>161</sup> The regime tried to clamp down on market activities as well as implementing currency reforms in 2009. The people rushed to protect their savings and panic buying followed. The regime closed all public markets in December 2009. There were even occasional riots<sup>162</sup> and some North Korean elites began to criticize the government.<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> Lankov, *The Real North Korea*, p. 119.

<sup>155</sup> Lankov, *The Real North Korea*, pp. 120-121.

<sup>156</sup> Lankov, *The Real North Korea*, p. 129.

<sup>157</sup> Lankov, *The Real North Korea*, p. 120.

<sup>158</sup> Nicholas Eberstadt, *The North Korean Economy: Between Crisis & Catastrophe* (New Brunswick: NJ, Transaction Publishers, 2009), p. 224.

<sup>159</sup> Eberstadt, *The North Korean Economy*, p. 224.

<sup>160</sup> Eberstadt, *The North Korean Economy*, pp. 232-236.

<sup>161</sup> Lankov, *The Real North Korea*, p. 121.

<sup>162</sup> Lankov, *The Real North Korea*, p. 129.

<sup>163</sup> Lankov, *The Real North Korea*, p. 129.

Again, rumors began to spread about the collapse of North Korea but nothing happened.<sup>164</sup> Nevertheless, what it demonstrated was that, if the regime pushed the people too far, North Koreans were willing to push back. Unless North Korea is prepared to fully restore the PDS, which is an unlikely outcome, some form of marketization is likely to remain in North Korea for the foreseeable future. This means that the regime is conceding some loss of control over the populace since official policy is that markets are illegal.<sup>165</sup> How Kim Jong-un manages this potential threat to his regime could be a key determinant for his survival. Currently, the Kim regime appears to be striking the right balance between ideological dogmatism and managed risk of expanding markets. Eberstadt claimed that if and when Kim was prepared to embrace economic reform, outside observers would know because he would be willing to abandon nuclear weapons and moderate North Korea's behavior toward the U.S.-South Korea alliance.<sup>166</sup> Would North Korea be willing to give up its nuclear weapons? Again, what is North Korea's survival strategy and how is it achieving favorable outcomes even while strengthening its nuclear deterrence?

### **2.2.3 Nuclear Weapons as a Survival Tool?**

According to Alexandre Mansourov, denuclearization of North Korea is unlikely without establishing mutual trust between the U.S. and North Korea.<sup>167</sup> He argued this was a very unlikely prospect since North Korea was convinced at the time President George W. Bush had a hostile policy of regime change.<sup>168</sup> North Korea also learned from Iraq (declaring it had no nuclear weapons emboldened the U.S. to invade)<sup>169</sup> and Libya (giving up its nuclear program invited NATO to topple Qaddafi's regime)<sup>170</sup> that the best way to survive was to declare itself as a nuclear weapons state and continue to expand its weapons

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<sup>164</sup> Lankov, *The Real North Korea*, pp. 129-130.

<sup>165</sup> Lankov, *The Real North Korea*, p. 122.

<sup>166</sup> Eberstadt, *The North Korean Economy*, pp. 232-236.

<sup>167</sup> Alexandre Y. Mansourov, "North Korea Stressed: Life on the Hamster Wheel," *International Journal of Korean Unification Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 2, 2005, p. 113.

<sup>168</sup> Mansourov, "North Korea Stressed," p. 99.

<sup>169</sup> Mansourov, "North Korea Stressed," p. 111.

<sup>170</sup> Mansourov, "North Korea Stressed," p. 111.

program to “protect the ideology, system, freedom, and democracy chosen by its people.”<sup>171</sup> According to Jonathan Pollack, North Korea has become “a de facto nuclear-weapons state.”<sup>172</sup> He also indicated all diplomatic efforts through 2011 had failed to denuclearize North Korea, and there may be “no exit” from the status quo.<sup>173</sup> In short, he argued for containment and hoped for change within North Korea, conceding North Korea has become a nuclear weapons state. This begs the question how North Korea has managed to overcome U.S.-led sanctions for so long when three richly endowed Middle Eastern petro-states – Iraq, Libya, and Iran – capitulated to external pressure.<sup>174</sup>

One explanation is that external pressure could have unintended consequences of creating a “siege mentality”<sup>175</sup> and helped the Kims to unify their people behind the regime.<sup>176</sup> Another explanation is that the regime successfully employed a strategy based on a cycle of nuclear provocations. North Korea would begin by manufacturing a crisis; then it would be open to negotiations, only to backtrack to get a better deal. If that failed, it would escalate the crisis and be willing to re-negotiate to continue the cycle.<sup>177</sup> As Graham Allison recently noted, it is “the most inconvenient truth” that North Korea, as “one of the poorest and most isolated states in the world,” has managed to defy the U.S. and China. Somehow North Korea has managed to expand its nuclear arsenal from two bombs worth of fissile materials and 8,000 spent fuel rods in 2001 to an arsenal of ten bombs proven by three (now four) nuclear tests, and a credible long-range missile threat by 2014. It also has an overt and perhaps even a covert uranium-enrichment program capable of producing more nuclear bombs.<sup>178</sup> North Korea has also demonstrated it is willing to cross a declared U.S. redline by proliferating nuclear weapons technology to Syria.<sup>179</sup> Even after these revelations, some agree with Pollack

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<sup>171</sup> Mansourov, “North Korea Stressed,” p. 99.

<sup>172</sup> Pollack, *No Exit*, p. 185.

<sup>173</sup> Pollack, *No Exit*, p. 188.

<sup>174</sup> Mansourov, “North Korea Stressed,” p. 89.

<sup>175</sup> Mansourov, “North Korea Stressed,” p. 89.

<sup>176</sup> Mansourov, “North Korea Stressed,” p. 89.

<sup>177</sup> Moore, ed., *North Korean Nuclear Operationality*, p. x.

<sup>178</sup> Moore, ed., *North Korean Nuclear Operationality*, p. ix.

<sup>179</sup> George W. Bush, *Decision Points* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2010), pp. 420-421.

that Washington has few or no options left to denuclearize North Korea. Despite the millions of North Koreans who died in the 1990s, nuclear weapons appear to have become a critical element of its survival strategy.<sup>180</sup>

This realization suggests North Korea may have employed smart power to achieve nuclear weapons state status. However, if Pyongyang continues to expand its nuclear and long-range missile capabilities, there may come a time when the U.S. has no choice but to consider the use of force. This means Pyongyang's nuclear weapons and missiles would no longer serve as a deterrent, but rather elicit a forceful U.S. response (discussed further in Chapter 7). Moreover, one could also argue Pyongyang's conventional forces, especially its long range artillery, have served this deterrent role just as well.<sup>181</sup> Does this mean North Korea will be dependent on China for survival, or will Kim still be able to maintain North Korea's independence and exploit China's own interests to strengthen his economy?

#### **2.2.4 The China Factor**

If one accepts the argument that North Korea is unwilling to risk economic reform, and its provocations will no longer extract huge amounts of foreign aid, could China be the answer to North Korea's survival? Some suggest that as long as China remains a Communist state, in the sense that the CCP continues to be the leading party and the idea of democratic centralism remains in place,<sup>182</sup> other Communist states in Asia (e.g., North Korea) are also likely to survive much longer.<sup>183</sup> For instance, with the CCP in power, China would continue to act as a "safety valve" of managed human traffic to China."<sup>184</sup> This argument indicates illegal migration from North Korea to China could help the Kim regime relieve some of the domestic pressure from the discontented hostile class as the economic situation declines. At the same time, remittances

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<sup>180</sup> Moore, ed., *North Korean Nuclear Operationality*, pp. 164-165.

<sup>181</sup> David Kang, Washington's Response to an Operationally Nuclear North Korea, in Gregory J. Moore, ed., *North Korean Nuclear Operationality, Regional Security & Nonproliferation* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014), pp. 150-151.

<sup>182</sup> Archie Brown, *The Rise and Fall of Communism* (New York: Harper-Collins Publishers, 2009), p. 606.

<sup>183</sup> Brown, *The Rise and Fall of Communism*, p. 613.

<sup>184</sup> Mansourov, "North Korea Stressed," p. 90.

from North Koreans and Korean-Chinese in China and their cross-border trading activities could also lessen the burden on the state to improve the domestic economy.<sup>185</sup>

Nevertheless, if China's economy fails to meet growth expectations and that leads to its own domestic instability, Chinese leaders will be confronted with a choice to either suppress discontent or liberalize the political system.<sup>186</sup> If China decides to liberalize instead of reopening the playbook for Tiananmen, it could eventually choose to pressure the Kim regime. Two ways to apply pressure would be either opening its borders to North Korea to encourage a mass exodus or attempting to seal its border to completely isolate the regime.<sup>187</sup> At this point, all this is mere speculation, but if China does hold the key to North Korea's survival Kim Jong-un may have to finally decide whether to reform North Korea's economy on his own terms or risk collapse.<sup>188</sup> However, it may be a bit hasty to suggest North Korea is totally dependent on China for survival.

A recent European Council on Foreign Relations study on China-North Korea relations points out the two countries drew much closer in 2010-2011. This study argued that China increased its economic influence on North Korea as the latter faced growing pressure from the UN. Nevertheless, a surprising outcome from the European study is that North Korea is increasingly becoming more independent from China as well. Some of the evidence noted includes two nuclear tests and another missile launch in April 2012 despite Chinese warnings not to escalate tensions<sup>189</sup> (North Korea has since conducted another nuclear test and launched more missiles).<sup>190</sup> North Korea also brazenly detained Chinese fishermen in the Yellow Sea.<sup>191</sup> Moreover, a Chinese mining

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<sup>185</sup> Mansourov, "North Korea Stressed," p. 90.

<sup>186</sup> Brown, *The Rise and Fall of Communism*, p. 613.

<sup>187</sup> Mansourov, "North Korea Stressed," p. 90.

<sup>188</sup> Thomas H. Henriksen and Jongryn Mo, eds., *North Korea After Kim Il Sung: Continuity or Change?* (Stanford, California: Hoover Institution Press, 1997), pp. 81-92.

<sup>189</sup> European Council on Foreign Relations, *China Analysis: Gaming North Korea* (Brussels: European Council on Foreign Relations, 2012), pp. 1-2.

<sup>190</sup> Chanlett-Avery and Rinehart, "North Korea," September 13, 2013, p. 1.

<sup>191</sup> European Council on Foreign Relations, *China Analysis: Gaming North Korea*, pp. 1-2.

company claimed North Koreans violated contracts<sup>192</sup> and ignored investors' rights.<sup>193</sup>

In spite of these developments, the study argued China cannot afford to give up on the Kims. What China wants is “a weak and isolated North Korea, but would find it much harder to establish relations of trust with a reformed regime – let alone with a transition or a reunified country.”<sup>194</sup> Bruce Cumings also recently commented that the George W. Bush administration even reached out to the Chinese to call “for a joint US-China program to topple the North Korean government.”<sup>195</sup> This went nowhere because China does not want North Korea to collapse, in part because its border would be threatened by a unified Korea with a large U.S. troop presence. This suggests that, in some ways, China may also be dependent on North Korea, and if so could be a critical point of leverage for the Kim regime as it attempts to minimize its dependence on China. This is another example of North Korea knowing the contextual intelligence regarding China's strategic calculus for the Korean Peninsula so it can exploit the relationship for economic gain while protecting its independence. Hence, it may be premature to assume China holds the key to Pyongyang's survival, just as so many had mistakenly assumed the Soviet Union and its satellites in Eastern Europe also held North Korea's “economic lifeline.”<sup>196</sup>

In sum, the examination of Eberstadt's warning about the end of North Korea has demonstrated that it has some shortcomings, but his work provides an important conceptual lens that can be applied to understand how changes in the North Korean economy can help make sense of complex events leading to its survival. Furthermore, the review of North Korea's economy has also raised other relevant explanations such as the role of China, debate over North Korea's economic reform, a negotiation strategy of aid extortion, the role of illicit activities, and the significance of North Korea's nuclear programs in its survival

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<sup>192</sup> European Council on Foreign Relations, *China Analysis: Gaming North Korea*, pp. 1-2.

<sup>193</sup> European Council on Foreign Relations, *China Analysis: Gaming North Korea*, pp. 1-2.

<sup>194</sup> European Council on Foreign Relations, *China Analysis: Gaming North Korea*, p. 2.

<sup>195</sup> Bruce Cumings, “The Kims' Three Bodies: Communism and Dynastic Succession in North Korea,” *Current History*, September 2012,” p. 217.

<sup>196</sup> Paul French, *North Korea: State of Paranoia* (New York: Zed Books, 2014), p. 4.

calculus. The review of these explanations so far indicates that all of them offered partial explanations, some more convincing than others, but many have lost their explanatory power over time and there seems to be no definitive answer to the roles these factors have played in North Korea's survival. Is the totalitarian explanation more convincing?

### **2.2.5 Totalitarianism and the Survival of North Korea**

Another explanation for North Korea's continued survival is the totalitarian nature of the regime. As noted in Chapter 1, Friedrich and Brzezinski noted there are six traits that define totalitarian societies. However, we have already discussed above that North Korea had lost command of its economy as markets continued to expand after the famine years. Moreover, North Koreans also gained access to outside information as it penetrated the North Korean border in the late 1990s. As a result, North Korea lost near monopoly control of information and its people are now more aware of the developments in the outside world.<sup>197</sup> In other words, two of the six traits of totalitarian dictatorships have weakened since Kim Jong-il's rule. Nevertheless, Daniel Byman and Jennifer Lind offer a useful interpretation of the Kims' totalitarian system. They argue that the Kims rely heavily on three tools in their totalitarian toolbox. First, the Kims have carefully crafted social policies to prevent any opposition from forming and devised a system where the majority of the population is dependent on the state. Second, the regime uses its internal security apparatus to deter and eliminate all opposition to the regime. Finally, they claim the regime has near total control of ideas and information, and uses this monopoly to promote its legitimacy and eliminate opponents.<sup>198</sup> As discussed above, they have lost monopoly control of information and more people are less dependent on the state due to expansion of markets but the secret police remain an effective tool of social control. What is not a key trait of totalitarian regimes is "the manipulation of foreign governments."<sup>199</sup> However,

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<sup>197</sup> Nat Kretchun and Jane Kim, "A Quiet Opening: North Koreans In A Changing Media Environment," *InterMedia* (Washington, DC: InterMedia, May 2012), p. 1.

<sup>198</sup> Byman and Lind, "Pyongyang's Survival Strategy," p. 47.

<sup>199</sup> Byman and Lind, "Pyongyang's Survival Strategy," pp. 45-46.

Byman and Lind correctly observe North Korea exploited both allies and adversaries to extract aid, and they reasoned it was due to external powers' *fear* of North Korean instability, loose nukes, and costly conflict.<sup>200</sup>

I argue that inciting *fear* in their neighbors was an important part of North Korea's strategy to extract aid, but it ignores how Pyongyang also cultivated *trust* to secure diplomatic agreements or build bilateral relationships. In other words, hard power alone cannot consistently achieve desired outcomes, even for rogue states like North Korea. The shortcoming of the totalitarian explanation is that while it can show how the system maintains internal control, it fails to address how these regimes interact with the outside world. As anticipated, others have argued that Pyongyang has transitioned beyond totalitarianism since the death of Kim Il-sung. Patrick McEachern argues that North Korea's bureaucrats in key institutions have a greater role in policymaking, particularly regarding foreign policy.<sup>201</sup> Thus his argument provides a useful way to examine its foreign policy and offers a way to examine how North Korea uses smart power to survive. He begins the discussion by arguing Kim Jong-il's North Korea became "more moderate"<sup>202</sup> than his father's totalitarian state, and its post-totalitarian system utilized the expert knowledge of its bureaucrats for national-level decision-making. This means the bureaucracy no longer simply transmits and implements "ideologically defined policy."<sup>203</sup> It participates in the policymaking process by providing "specified knowledge"<sup>204</sup> to its leadership. Hence, instead of a single party developing and implementing policy based primarily on ideology, there is a greater diversity of inputs from the bureaucratic elements of the KPA and the Cabinet.

What this means is that bureaucrats and party ideologues tend to have a moderating effect on national policy under a post-totalitarian system, which is more representative of a broader set of interests that are present in the state.<sup>205</sup>

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<sup>200</sup> Byman and Lind, "Pyongyang's Survival Strategy," pp. 64-66.

<sup>201</sup> Patrick McEachern, "North Korea's Policy Process: Assessing Institutional Policy Preferences," p. 528.

<sup>202</sup> McEachern, *Inside The Red Box*, p. 239.

<sup>203</sup> McEachern, *Inside The Red Box*, p. 239.

<sup>204</sup> McEachern, *Inside The Red Box*, p. 239.

<sup>205</sup> McEachern, *Inside The Red Box*, p. 239.



McEachern argued that while this does not make the system democratic, “it does make it more liberal than its predecessor.”<sup>206</sup> He also suggests this occurred because Kim Jong-il was weaker than Kim Il-sung due to his lack of charisma and revolutionary credentials, and he also faced more difficult domestic and international environment.<sup>207</sup> As a result, McEachern argued that North Korea’s core institutions – Cabinet, KPA and party – each concurrently pursued conflicting strategic objectives.<sup>208</sup> Most importantly, he wrote, “My theory argues that Kim’s power is limited in the sense that he rules through a rational bureaucracy.”<sup>209</sup> This made McEachern realize North Korea’s “post-totalitarian institutionalism is [why the system is] sustainable.”<sup>210</sup>

I argue there is another way to interpret how the 1994 Agreed Framework was negotiated under former President Bill Clinton. The agreement demonstrated how North Korean negotiators successfully leveraged the perception of Party and Military hard-liners in Pyongyang to gain the trust of their U.S. counterparts. For example, during one episode of the Agreed Framework negotiations, Pyongyang requested assurance from the U.S. president and demanded energy assistance up front for freezing its plutonium program at Yongbyon and allowing IAEA monitoring of spent fuel rods, and halting the construction of two new nuclear reactors. However, Pyongyang’s lead negotiator refused to concede on U.S. demands that North Korea must shut down the 5 megawatt (MW) reactor.<sup>211</sup> North Koreans warned the reactor would be operating until the Light Water Reactors (LWRs) were delivered under the supervision of the U.S. and producing energy, and only then would Pyongyang rejoin the Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT). North Korea also refused to ship the spent fuel overseas. Nonetheless, some in the U.S. viewed the proposal as a sign of Pyongyang’s flexibility.<sup>212</sup>

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<sup>206</sup> McEachern, *Inside The Red Box*, p. 239.

<sup>207</sup> McEachern, *Inside The Red Box*, p. 241.

<sup>208</sup> McEachern, *Inside The Red Box*, p. 127.

<sup>209</sup> McEachern, *Inside The Red Box*, p. 49.

<sup>210</sup> McEachern, *Inside The Red Box*, p. 240.

<sup>211</sup> Joel S. Wit, Daniel B. Poneman, and Robert L. Gallucci, *The First North Korean Nuclear Crisis, Going Critical* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2004), pp. 300-301.

<sup>212</sup> Wit, Poneman, and Gallucci, *The First North Korean Nuclear Crisis*, pp. 300-301.

The KPA kept the pressure on Washington by issuing a statement that it must protect North Korea's sovereignty, and thus it "can never allow any attempt to open up military facilities through special inspections." North Korean negotiators cautioned that if there was no deal, the KPA would call for restarting the 5-MW reactor and may even pursue reprocessing of plutonium. They subsequently showed some flexibility by suggesting that if Washington would give Pyongyang more time on special inspections, it might result in North Korean commitment not to restart the 5-MW reactor.<sup>213</sup> The U.S. speculated that this signaled either a lack of leadership consensus or an attempt by Pyongyang to get a better deal, *but no one knew for sure*. The former supports McEachern argument there was institutional policy divergence, but this also suggests the possibility that *Pyongyang's main aim was to maximize its outcomes and that required careful policy coordination under a central authority*. In other words, McEachern may have overlooked the possibility that North Korean institutions could in fact be coordinating their actions under a central authority to develop a strategy to exercise smart power.

In fact, Kim Il-sung pointed out in the 1960s that one of the lessons he learned from the Cuban Missile Crisis was that "the most important thing is unity," and "there is nothing to fear so long as the whole Party and the entire people are united."<sup>214</sup> One of Kim Jong-il's own biographies suggests he learned this lesson well from his father. Kim Jong-il stated that when he began to work at the Party Central Committee on June 19, 1962, "he ensured that a well-organized system for disseminating Comrade Kim Il-sung's instructions was established throughout the Party, and a system for adopting measures for implementing his instructions and reviewing their implementation was established."<sup>215</sup> This suggests it is reasonable to argue North Korea's institutions may have coordinated and focused their efforts on achieving successful outcomes. If so, this would help to confirm that, even under Kim

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<sup>213</sup> Wit, Poneman, and Gallucci, *The First North Korean Nuclear Crisis*, pp. 301-303.

<sup>214</sup> Kim Il Sung, *Selected Works*, Volume III (Pyongyang, Korea: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1971), p. 523.

<sup>215</sup> Kim Jong Il: *Brief History* (Pyongyang, Korea: Foreign Language Publishing House, 1998), p. 19.

Jong-il, North Korea's core institutions generally followed direction from central authority and Kim may have succeeded in creating a "monolithic guidance system."<sup>216</sup> Most importantly, McEachern emphasizes that *if one looks beyond the policy outcomes* one can observe how divergent the groups are within the North Korean system.<sup>217</sup> The problem is that observers cannot ignore the successful policy outcomes and simply focus on the North's institutional media declarations. Not linking the two appears to be the weakness of McEachern's approach. Simply because one observes one North Korean institution pursuing a hard line (e.g., deadly military clashes against the South in 2002), while another institution pursues a softer one (e.g., pursuing inter-Korean trade and congratulating the South for a successful World Cup),<sup>218</sup> it does not mean central authority has lost control and its institutions have more power than they actually do.

In sum, the evidence suggests that what McEachern has observed as post-totalitarian institutionalism<sup>219</sup> could also be interpreted as a carefully crafted and centrally directed information campaign coupled with a thoughtful blend of hard and soft power to achieve Kim Jong-il's aims. Instead of a post-totalitarian model sustaining North Korea with its core institutions working to prevent any one of them from dominating the others,<sup>220</sup> what we have seen is the probability that a relatively weak North Korea could be surviving by maintaining unity under a single leader and ideology. It is more likely that the Kims have co-opted their elites, to include the regimes' bureaucrats. Once they have been co-opted, "they shift from independent spokesmen to docile functionaries who depend on the government for their position and fortune."<sup>221</sup> Having said that, what McEachern may have gotten right is that there are some elite bureaucrats that do participate in the policymaking process by providing their expertise to the North Korean leadership, but they have traditionally done so in support of the Kims. This is why McEachern's work is important to this

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<sup>216</sup> Lim, *Kim Jong Il's Leadership of North Korea*, p. 68.

<sup>217</sup> McEachern, *Inside The Red Box*, p. 104.

<sup>218</sup> McEachern, *Inside The Red Box*, p. 102.

<sup>219</sup> McEachern, *Inside The Red Box*, p. 240.

<sup>220</sup> McEachern, *Inside The Red Box*, pp. 240-241.

<sup>221</sup> Byman and Lind, "Pyongyang's Survival Strategy," p. 58.

study because it helps to partially explain how North Korea's strategy generally nets it something it wants and reveals the Kims are "playing a pretty good hand with a bad set of cards."<sup>222</sup> Could Kim Jong-il have done this without effective leadership? I argue that was not possible and now examine the potential role of Kim Il-sung's guerrilla legacy in his development as a leader.

### **2.2.6 The Role of Kim's Guerrilla Legacy in North Korea's Survival**

Many scholars argue North Korea's claim that Kim Il-sung was responsible for defeating Japan is inaccurate. Nonetheless, one of his official biographies claimed Kim Il-sung "had fought the million-strong army of Japanese imperialism for 15 long years and finally won freedom for the fatherland, overthrowing the Japanese imperialist brigands."<sup>223</sup> Another official biography claimed that after the Soviets declared war on Japan on August 8, 1945, Kim led the Korean People's Revolutionary Army as it fought alongside the Soviet Army to completely annihilate the Japanese Army by August 15, 1945.<sup>224</sup> Charles Armstrong makes it clear Kim never fought the Japanese during the Soviet liberation of Korea. He highlighted that Kim and his guerrillas were forced to return to the Russian Far East (RFE) after they failed to cross the China-North Korea border in August 1945, but eventually managed to get on board the Soviet ship *Pugachev* and arrived in Wonsan, North Korea, on September 19, 1945.<sup>225</sup> However, Bruce Cumings cautioned that Kim Il-sung was nevertheless a well-recognized and impressive leader of anti-Japanese guerrillas in Manchuria by the mid-1930s. As a result, North Korean leaders continue to this day to "trace everything back to this distant beginning,"<sup>226</sup> and above every other trait of the North Korean regime (communist, nationalist, rogue, axis of evil) stands its legacy as anti-Japanese fighters.<sup>227</sup>

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<sup>222</sup> Cha, *The Impossible State*, p. 237. Kongdan Oh has also noted how deftly Kim Jong Il had managed his foreign policy to receive international attention and support.

<sup>223</sup> Baik Bong, *Kim Il Sung: Biography, Volume [II]* (Beirut, Lebanon: Dar Al-Talia, 1973), p. 15.

<sup>224</sup> Committee for Translation, *Kim Il Sung Biography*, Tokyo, Japan, 1969, pp. 529-532.

<sup>225</sup> Charles Armstrong, *The North Korean Revolution: 1945-1950* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2003), p. 55.

<sup>226</sup> Bruce Cumings, *The Korean War: A History* (New York: Modern Library, 2010), p. 45.

<sup>227</sup> Cumings, *The Korean War*, pp. 44-45.

Why is this relevant to North Korea's survival? Cheong Sung-Hwa emphasized that one of the few common denominators between the two Koreas was their hatred of Japan. In South Korea, President Syngman Rhee used his long career as an anti-Japanese nationalist to bolster his political power since he was well aware that most Koreans hated Japan. However, the most powerful political party in South Korea was viewed as a marginal ruling class that was labeled as pro-Japanese.<sup>228</sup> For example, when the U.S. met with Japan and its allies in San Francisco in 1951 to reach a peace settlement with Japan, Washington attempted to include Seoul in the multilateral discussions. The British viewed the U.S. move as offensive because "British and Commonwealth soldiers' memories of the brutality of Korean soldiers serving as prison camp guards of the Japanese Army in what was then still Burma or Malaysia powerfully informed this sentiment."<sup>229</sup>

Moreover, despite his nationalist credentials, Rhee lacked a political base in South Korea. In fact, by the time Rhee returned to Seoul, his English was better than his Korean and the main reason he was chosen by the U.S. is because Chiang Kai-shek, the Chinese nationalist leader, recommended him to General Douglas MacArthur as "a Korean that America could 'count on'."<sup>230</sup> Kim Il-sung was aware of many of these developments in South Korea. He accused the U.S. of consolidating pro-Japanese elements after liberation to facilitate its colonial rule in South Korea. He called out Rhee as a "long-fostered running dog" from the U.S. and a reactionary ring leader.<sup>231</sup> Kim and Rhee both vowed to reunify the country by force and even before the start of the Korea War, conflict along the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel and rebellions within the South took 100,000 lives.<sup>232</sup> As a result, it should be no surprise that Kim Il-sung immortalized his

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<sup>228</sup> Cheong, Sung-Hwa, *The Politics of Anti-Japanese Sentiment in Korea: Japanese-South Korean Relations Under American Occupation, 1945-1952* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1991), pp. xi-xiv.

<sup>229</sup> Alexis Dudden, *Troubled Apologies: Among Japan, Korea, and the United States* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), p. 74.

<sup>230</sup> Dudden, *Troubled Apologies*, p. 69.

<sup>231</sup> Kim Han Gil, *Modern History of Korea* (Pyongyang, Korea: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1979), pp. 173-176.

<sup>232</sup> John Tirman, *The Deaths of Others: The Fate of Civilians in America's Wars* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 79-82.

own anti-Japanese guerrilla experience in Manchuria. According to Kwon Heonik and Chung Byung-Ho's work on North Korean politics:

We know that the Manchurian legacy was central to Kim Il-sung's charismatic authority throughout his long political career. We have seen also how this legacy was forcefully revived in the 1970s to become a singularly important saga in the national history and how this process was intertwined with the unfolding of the drama of the political succession from Kim Il-sung to Kim Jong-il.<sup>233</sup>

This evidence suggests the Manchurian legacy was part of the inheritance that Kim Jong-il received from his father as he became the Dear Leader. The North Koreans continue to describe the Japanese colonial period as the period of military occupation. They do so "knowing that South Korean officials cannot use the same expression for the same past," because American soldiers have remained in South Korea since the end of the Korean War. Hence, the Kims use of the "Japanese era as a means to reach and manipulate public sentiment at whim proved to be an incredibly powerful tool."<sup>234</sup> As discussed in Chapter 7, this remains true even under Kim Jong-un's rule.

This is why gaining a better understanding of Kim Il-sung's experience in Manchuria is relevant to the Kims' exercise of smart power. The Kims' legitimacy to lead North Korea is tied to this anti-Japanese legacy. Kim Il-sung knew how Koreans on both sides of the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) felt about the Japanese, and he used this understanding to indoctrinate those in the North that they were the true Koreans while their brethren in the South were being exploited by pro-Japanese Koreans and U.S. imperialists. John Tirman was harsher than Kim Il-sung about Rhee and his regime. Tirman said "the CIA had no illusions that he [Rhee] was anything other than a demagogue 'bent on autocratic rule'." What is more, the CIA knew that Rhee "was aligned with a hard right wing that had collaborated with Imperial Japan and needed someone like Rhee, without the taint of Japan, to govern a new semifeudal state."<sup>235</sup>

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<sup>233</sup> Kwon, Heonik and Chung Byung-Ho, *North Korea: Beyond Charismatic Politics* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2012), pp. 102-103.

<sup>234</sup> Dudden, *Troubled Apologies*, pp. 71-81.

<sup>235</sup> John Tirman, *The Deaths of Others*, p. 93.

What this indicates is that not *all* of the myth of Kim's cult of personality is a "lie" and thus it needs to be scrutinized more carefully in subsequent chapters. More importantly, Kim Il-sung appears to have revived his guerrilla legacy during the 1970s to help facilitate the smooth transfer of charismatic authority to his son. Simply assuming everything about Kim is a lie carries its own risks and may lead to ignoring or misinterpreting North Korea's policies and actions. Finally, I examine the role of ideology in North Korea's survival.

### **2.2.7 The Use of *Juche* Ideology to Unify the North Korean People**

Charles Armstrong argues that North Korean ideology and its own style of socialism, plus its "going it alone" approach, have unified North Koreans behind the Kim regime and thus it is likely to survive for the foreseeable future.<sup>236</sup> Armstrong argues that "for better or worse, it has worked."<sup>237</sup> North Korea has successfully resisted 20 years of forecasts in South Korea, Japan, and the West that its collapse was at hand.<sup>238</sup> Despite the economic failure and political isolation resulting from the collapse of the Soviet Union and its satellites in Europe, Kim Il-sung had long prepared his people to pursue their own *Juche* ideology of self-reliance<sup>239</sup> in "all areas of political, economic, and social activity."<sup>240</sup> Instead of opening up and implementing reforms like China and Vietnam, his son Kim Jong-il initially resorted to a strategy of isolation and strengthened central authority, emphasizing "a highly defensive nationalism"<sup>241</sup> to address external threats.<sup>242</sup> He appears to have sensed that any potential benefits of reform were not worth the risk since South Korea appeared ready to absorb North Korea, similarly to the way East Germany fell to its fraternal and ideological rival. Kim viewed reform as the root of evil, not a path to salvation. He apparently fought materialist corruption and the weakening of ideology.<sup>243</sup> In order to survive, the Kim regime focused on further inculcating Korean

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<sup>236</sup> Armstrong, "Ideological Introversion and Regime Survival," p. 99.

<sup>237</sup> Armstrong, "Ideological Introversion and Regime Survival," p. 100.

<sup>238</sup> Armstrong, "Ideological Introversion and Regime Survival," p. 100.

<sup>239</sup> Armstrong, "Ideological Introversion and Regime Survival," p. 100.

<sup>240</sup> Armstrong, "Ideological Introversion and Regime Survival," p. 100.

<sup>241</sup> Armstrong, "Ideological Introversion and Regime Survival," p. 101.

<sup>242</sup> Armstrong, "Ideological Introversion and Regime Survival," p. 101.

<sup>243</sup> Armstrong, "Ideological Introversion and Regime Survival," p. 101.

nationalism, strengthening the military and calling for complete loyalty to the Kim family. The improvement of the lives of the North Korean people took a back seat to strengthening the Kims' style of socialism.<sup>244</sup> It signaled North Korea was like no other communist state and it would not collapse like most of the others.<sup>245</sup>

Armstrong also argued "North Korea in the 1990s and early 2000s greatly expanded its political and economic ties with the capitalist West and embarked on limited economic reform, while insisting on unwavering adherence to *Juche*."<sup>246</sup> Armstrong views the "socialism in our style"<sup>247</sup> concept as potentially having some flexibility. He says "the core principle of *Juche* was not economic autarky, but political self-determination and freedom from outside control."<sup>248</sup> In actuality, Armstrong suggests Kim Jong-il must have known that dogmatic application of *Juche* and its unique socialism alone were not sufficient for North Korea to survive. In addition, he was pragmatic enough to seek foreign aid, even from his archrival South Korea, which could have undermined the regime.<sup>249</sup> Kim nevertheless managed to muddle through until 2010, but by then he had given up even the minimalist approach to economic reform and relied on China and nuclear weapons for regime security.<sup>250</sup> On the issue of ideology, however, Kim Jong-il never lost faith in *Juche* or the Kim family's own brand of socialism.<sup>251</sup> However, Kongdan Oh disagreed by arguing that the Kims have had one principle and that was to ensure that the people are loyal to the Kim family. The Kims are willing to use any ideology to include the *Juche* idea, military-first policy, and Kim Il-Sung thought to ensure mass obedience and loyalty. Oh argued the masses "are no longer socialists; nor do they respect their leader."<sup>252</sup> In short, the North Korean system was rotting, ideology

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<sup>244</sup> Armstrong, "Ideological Introversion and Regime Survival," p. 101.

<sup>245</sup> Armstrong, "Ideological Introversion and Regime Survival," pp. 100-102.

<sup>246</sup> Armstrong, "Ideological Introversion and Regime Survival," p. 101.

<sup>247</sup> Armstrong, "Ideological Introversion and Regime Survival," p. 101.

<sup>248</sup> Armstrong, "Ideological Introversion and Regime Survival," p. 101.

<sup>249</sup> Armstrong, "Ideological Introversion and Regime Survival," pp. 100-102.

<sup>250</sup> Armstrong, "Ideological Introversion and Regime Survival," pp. 101-102.

<sup>251</sup> Armstrong, "Ideological Introversion and Regime Survival," p. 102.

<sup>252</sup> Ralph Hassig and Kongdan Oh, *The Hidden People of North Korea: Everyday Life in the Hermit Kingdom* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2009), pp. 1-2.



no longer mattered, and the words of Kim Jong-il were meaningless.<sup>253</sup> In the end, even Armstrong appears to admit ideology alone will be insufficient to ensure North Korea's survival.<sup>254</sup>

Victor Cha, on the other hand, warns that the end of North Korea is near. Cha argues that North Korean society is slowly evolving as a result of the invasion of information from the outside. Cha boldly predicts North Korea will collapse sooner rather than later.<sup>255</sup> Cha argues in his work, *The Impossible State: North Korea, Past and Future*, that the Kims may have survived because North Korea has never been a top priority issue for the U.S., like the unrelenting pursuit of Al Qaeda leadership or management of the Arab-Israeli conflict. According to Cha, whenever a North Korean crisis floated up to the highest level, the main U.S. effort has traditionally been to de-escalate the situation through negotiations. The U.S. was unable or unwilling to seriously consider ways to resolve the persistent crises permanently. As a result of this "relative crisis indifference"<sup>256</sup> syndrome in the U.S., and perhaps also due to North Korea's fortuitous geographical inheritance of a shared border with China, it has managed to survive. What this meant for Cha is that the North's survival had nothing to do with the skills of its leaders and officials.<sup>257</sup> It was purely "an accident of history."<sup>258</sup> Thus, a major crisis in North Korea or even reunification in the near-term was a realistic expectation for Cha.<sup>259</sup>

Cha argued these outcomes were likely because of the "unique constellation of forces"<sup>260</sup> gathering around North Korea resulting from Kim Jong-il's death, the inexperience of Kim Jong-un, North Korea's growing marketization, and increased flow of information from the outside. All of these forces would act in resonance to overwhelm the North Korean leadership and

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<sup>253</sup> Hassig and Oh, *The Hidden People of North Korea*, p. 247.

<sup>254</sup> Armstrong argued for the role of ideology in regime survival but recognizes Pyongyang was pragmatic enough to seek foreign aid, relied on Chinese support and nuclear weapons for regime security. Armstrong, "Ideological Introversion and Regime Survival," pp. 99-119.

<sup>255</sup> Cha, *The Impossible State*, p. 430.

<sup>256</sup> Cha, *The Impossible State*, p. 430.

<sup>257</sup> Cha, *The Impossible State*, pp. 429-430.

<sup>258</sup> Cha, *The Impossible State*, p. 430.

<sup>259</sup> Cha, *The Impossible State*, p. 430.

<sup>260</sup> Cha, *The Impossible State*, p. 430.

bring an end to the Kim Dynasty.<sup>261</sup> The incipient power of this unique constellation of forces emboldens Cha to simultaneously and paradoxically acknowledge and ignore North Korea's history. He is well aware North Korea has repeatedly demonstrated its resilience and unwavering will to survive on its own terms. Nonetheless, Cha criticizes Korea analysts in the U.S. Intelligence Community (IC) for dogmatically clinging to the traditional way of thinking about North Korea. Cha believes they are wrongly fixated on the fact that North Korea's past successes will simply beget more success and it is destined to survive for the foreseeable future.<sup>262</sup> Cha points out that, even if North Korea has survived numerous challenges in the past, the recent Arab Spring would indicate the end of North Korea is near and the status quo is unlikely to persist on the Korean Peninsula. Cha emphasizes that no one predicted the Arab Spring, and sudden change even in North Korea cannot be ruled out.<sup>263</sup>

Melanie Kirkpatrick agrees North Korea is vulnerable. She recommends an "information invasion" to expose North Koreans to foreign ideas, to promote opposition, and to terminate the Kim regime.<sup>264</sup> It is no wonder that the Korean Workers' Party (KWP) stressed that if "one discards socialism, it is death. This is a bloody lesson that the people learned again from social historic realities in the nineties."<sup>265</sup> Moreover, other authoritarian regimes such as China have also resorted to similar tactics by firewalling certain words on their Internet to inoculate the regimes from the contagion effects of the Arab Spring.<sup>266</sup> Bruce Cumings is even more blunt. He says, "There will be no 'Korean Spring' until the Korean War is finally brought to an end, and until the two Koreas have reconciled along the path etched out by South Korean Presidents Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun from 1998 to 2008."<sup>267</sup> Part of the reason is because Kim commands a huge loyal army and there is no indication of general disloyalty

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<sup>261</sup> Cha, *The Impossible State*, p. 430.

<sup>262</sup> Cha, *The Impossible State*, p. 430.

<sup>263</sup> Cha, *The Impossible State*, p. 430.

<sup>264</sup> Melanie Kirkpatrick, *Escape from North Korea: The Untold Story of Asia's Underground Railroad* (New York: Encounter Books, 2012), p. 275.

<sup>265</sup> Eberstadt, *The End of North Korea*, p. 120.

<sup>266</sup> Cha, *The Impossible State*, p. 431.

<sup>267</sup> Cumings, "The Kims' Three Bodies," p. 220.

among the masses.<sup>268</sup> Cha is undeterred by these arguments. The Arab Spring gives him hope that even the most stable authoritarian regimes are vulnerable. Cha writes that North Korea “is only as strong as its ability to control knowledge. This control enables the regime to stand on its ideology. Without ideology, there is no North Korea as we know it.”<sup>269</sup> Cha, however, admits he does not know when or how North Korea will end.<sup>270</sup>

The review and critique of Cha and Armstrong’s work has raised the possibility that whether North Korea continues to survive may depend on its ideology and how resistant it will be to continued penetration of new ideas from the outside. Both seem to agree that whether Kim Jong-un succeeds in strengthening the regime’s ideology is likely to be one of the key determinants of his successful rule of North Korea. This suggests North Korea’s use of smart power could be significantly influenced by the need to strengthen its ideology and preserve its own style of socialism. If one recognizes that the majority of North Korean defectors do not harbor any negative sentiment for Kim Jong-il,<sup>271</sup> then it suggests the systemic decay in North Korea may not be so severe and Kim Jong-il’s leadership could have been under-appreciated by some observers. The Kims may have survived in part because of their leadership ability, and not simply because of relative crisis indifference syndrome in the U.S. or their close proximity to China. A closer examination of its leaderships’ interaction with the outside world is necessary. Is it possible that the North’s survival had something to do with the skills of its leaders? Are the Kims exercising smart power to survive? A closer examination of Pyongyang’s domestic policies and its interaction with the U.S. and others is required to understand the role of the leadership and how they exercise smart power to survive.

### **2.2.8 Existing Arguments for North Korean Provocations**

As mentioned above, there are many studies that have attempted to explain why North Korea conducts its provocations or hostile foreign policy

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<sup>268</sup> Cumings, “The Kims’ Three Bodies,” p. 220.

<sup>269</sup> Cha, *The Impossible State*, p. 461.

<sup>270</sup> Cha, *The Impossible State*, pp. 462-463.

<sup>271</sup> Cha, *The Impossible State*, p. 443.

activities. As Eberstadt and Noland have noted, one of the most common explanations suggest North Korea obtained foreign aid through “military extortion,”<sup>272</sup> and its only asset to receive aid was the threat it posed to others.<sup>273</sup> In short, Pyongyang had to manufacture crises to elicit aid to sustain itself, and this became its survival strategy.<sup>274</sup> Chris Hill recently echoed this common understanding of North Korean provocations by highlighting that Kim Jong-un’s behavior seems to be imitating both of his forefathers. Hill argued Kim continues to rely on the old tactic of creating “*a crisis for no apparent reason, and expect a reward for ending it.*” However, he acknowledged that the problem for this argument is that Kim did not gain any reward for ending the recent landmine incident in August 2015 that maimed two South Korean soldiers. After wondering why Kim may have manufactured the crisis, Hill speculated, “What Mr. Kim does seem to have received is South Korea’s agreement to stop the [loudspeaker] broadcast, which included some telling personal criticism of him. And that may have been enough.”<sup>275</sup> The problem is that the loudspeaker broadcast had been suspended by the South Koreans since 2004,<sup>276</sup> thus there has to be another reason why Kim manufactured the landmine incident. So why does North Korea resort to provocations?

#### **2.2.8.1 Understanding North Korea’s Military-Diplomatic Campaigns**

An important study that addressed North Korean provocations was done by Narushige Michishita in 2010. He examined Pyongyang’s diplomacy and military activities from 1966 to 2008. Michishita concluded that “North Korea’s objectives have changed significantly over time.” During the 1960s, he argued North Korea’s aims were “ambitious, aggressive, and hostile” as it attempted to stop U.S. intelligence collection activities, create a second front in support of

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<sup>272</sup> Eberstadt, *The End of North Korea*, p.19

<sup>273</sup> Noland, *Avoiding the Apocalypse*, p. 10.

<sup>274</sup> Eberstadt, *The End of North Korea*, p.19

<sup>275</sup> Christopher Hill, “North Korea’s Endgame,” A special report by the Washington Times, Looking Forward: The essential alliance of Korea and America on the world stage, Washington Times, October 15, 2015, p. 5.

<sup>276</sup> Anna Fifield, “S. Korea agrees to end broadcasts as North expresses regret for provocations,” *Washington Post*, August 24, 2015, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia\\_pacific/north-korea-hates-those-loudspeakers-because-they-make-fun-of-kim/2015/08/24/439f6039-3f37-490b-9fa1-e3b8022893e6\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/north-korea-hates-those-loudspeakers-because-they-make-fun-of-kim/2015/08/24/439f6039-3f37-490b-9fa1-e3b8022893e6_story.html) (accessed August 24, 2015).

North Vietnam during the Vietnam War, and to incite a revolution in the South.<sup>277</sup> However, since his study began in 1966, he failed to consider Kim Il-sung's peaceful reunification efforts during the fall of 1960. On August 14, 1960, Kim offered "a new radical proposal" to reunify the country. He proposed "a north-south Confederation and extensive economic and cultural exchanges and promoting the peaceful reunification of the country." He was so confident about what he was creating in the North; he pushed for free general elections throughout Korea "on a democratic basis without any foreign interference." In case Seoul refused his offer, he pushed for economic and cultural exchanges, which included Koreans traveling freely across the border. Kim even offered to significantly downsize the KPA to 100,000 or less if the U.S. withdrew its troops from South Korea.<sup>278</sup> In short, Kim may have been ambitious, but he was not aggressive or hostile in 1960. What Kim Il-sung desired at the time was stability on the Peninsula to peacefully "unite the country under his leadership."<sup>279</sup> However, perceived threats from Park Chung-hee's military coup in 1961 and the Cuban missile crisis would change Kim's calculus.<sup>280</sup>

In the 1970s, Michishita argued Pyongyang's aim remained ambitious but it also appeared to be more cooperative, especially with the U.S. He argued the focus of the North's efforts during this decade was to protect its territorial claims at sea, promoting a peace treaty with Washington, calling for U.S. troop withdrawal from South Korea, and continuing to destabilize South Korea.<sup>281</sup> Although Michishita was correct to point out that North Korea called for the withdrawal of U.S. troops during this period, he appears to have overlooked the fact that Kim had launched a "peace offensive" toward Seoul and not particularly toward Washington (the Chinese were doing that). As Bernd Schaefer stated, "Though socialist reunification was impossible...there now

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<sup>277</sup> Narushige, Michishita, *North Korea's Military-Diplomatic Campaigns, 1966-2008* (New York: Routledge, 2010), p. 187.

<sup>278</sup> *Reunification Program of the DPRK*, pp. 62-63.

<sup>279</sup> Mitchell B. Lerner, "'Mostly Propaganda in Nature:' Kim Il Sung, the Juche Ideology, and the Second Korean War," North Korea International Documentation Project, Working Paper #3, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, December 2010, p. 28.

<sup>280</sup> Person, "The Cuban Missile Crisis and the Origins of North Korea's Policy of Self-Reliance in National Defense," p. 3.

<sup>281</sup> Michishita, *North Korea's Military-Diplomatic Campaigns*, p. 187.

existed realistic hope for a new regime in Seoul as a first step toward this goal [peaceful reunification]; the DPRK peace offensive denied the ROK [Republic of Korea or South Korea] regime [Park Chung-hee government] any 'excuse to suppress democratic force'." Kim Il-sung sincerely believed in the early 1970s that his system was better than the one in the South and he would achieve success in getting rid of Park through democratic elections, and eventually be able to establish a "democratic unified government" after nation-wide popular election on the Peninsula. However, the North Koreans would become more aggressive after Seoul promoted a two state solution (instead of a confederation) for its accession to the UN in June 1973 and the South Korean agents attempted to kidnap South Korea's opposition leader Kim Dae-jung in Tokyo in August 1973. The Soviets claimed Pyongyang would seek opportunities to pursue armed reunification as early as October 1973, "probably following a 'request' for help from 'democratic forces in South Korea'." Nevertheless, Kim allowed lower-level engagement to continue with Seoul from December 1973 to March 1975, and when a Korean resident in Japan from a pro-North Korean group in Japan attempted to assassinate Park in South Korea, the North claimed it was unaware of the plot.<sup>282</sup>

Michishita argued that the more balanced effort of the 1970s became "extremely aggressive" during the 1980s as North Korea attempted to assassinate South Korea's president and its agents bombed a South Korean airliner to destabilize the 1988 Olympic Games in Seoul. Michishita went on to suggest Pyongyang became "more decidedly defensive" and the most important aims became regime survival and procurement of economic aid.<sup>283</sup> However, he seemed to minimize the influence of Kim Dae-jung's Sunshine Policy by arguing that Pyongyang's coercive diplomacy "significantly slowed down the development of inter-Korean economic cooperation."<sup>284</sup> According to Jang Jin-

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<sup>282</sup> Bernd Schaefer, "Overconfidence Shattered: North Korean Unification Policy, 1971-1975," North Korea International Documentation Project, Working Paper #2, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, December 2010, pp. 3-24.

<sup>283</sup> Michishita, *North Korea's Military-Diplomatic Campaigns*, pp. 187-188.

<sup>284</sup> Michishita, *North Korea's Military-Diplomatic Campaigns*, pp. 185-186.

sung, Kim Jong-il exploited the Sunshine Policy to save his regime.<sup>285</sup> This may be an exaggeration but there is little doubt that the Sunshine Policy provided Kim opportunities to extract billions in hard currency and aid. In fact, the reason why Michishita could argue North Korea's "purely military objectives diminished in importance [after the late 1990s] while diplomatic and economic objectives loomed larger over time," was largely due to the Sunshine Policy. To be clear, he stated, "Since the 1990s, North Korea's military-diplomatic campaigns have been about trading military capabilities for diplomatic and economic gains."<sup>286</sup> However, this became less convincing as North Korea formally declared itself a nuclear weapons state in April 2013,<sup>287</sup> and there is a growing concern Pyongyang would never abandon its nuclear weapons.<sup>288</sup>

#### **2.2.8.2 North Korea's Use of Diversionary Theory**

Jung Sung-chul examined whether domestic unrest caused interstate conflict (i.e., diversionary theory). After quantitatively examining over a million cases of conflict from 1920 to 2011, he concluded that "domestically-troubled states are more aggressive than others only toward certain type of states."<sup>289</sup> He called this assertion "diversionary target theory,"<sup>290</sup> and went on to claim troubled states "are more likely to initiate a military conflict against slightly stronger rising power states than other rising power targets, and prefer weaker territory targets to other territorial targets when choosing their military targets."<sup>291</sup> In order to validate his theory, Jung examined two cases and one of them was the first North Korean nuclear crisis in the early 1990s (the other was South Korea's troop deployment to Vietnam).<sup>292</sup>

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<sup>285</sup> Jang, Jin-sung, *Dear Leader, Poet, Spy, Escapee, A Look Inside North Korea* (New York: Atria Books, 2014), pp. 252-258.

<sup>286</sup> Michishita, *North Korea's Military-Diplomatic Campaigns*, pp. 187-188.

<sup>287</sup> KCNA, "Law on Consolidating Position of Nuclear Weapons State Adopted," April 1, 2013, <http://www.kcna.us/2013/04/01/news-23/> (accessed September 26, 2015).

<sup>288</sup> Pollack, *No Exit: North Korea*, p. 188.

<sup>289</sup> Jung Sung-chul, "Fear and Greed: Domestic Unrest, Foreign Target, and Interstate Conflict," (PhD diss., Rutgers University, October 2012), pp. 2-69, accessed December 4, 2015, <https://rucore.libraries.rutgers.edu/rutgers-lib/38842/>.

<sup>290</sup> Jung, "Fear and Greed," p. 142.

<sup>291</sup> Jung, "Fear and Greed," p. 69.

<sup>292</sup> Jung, "Fear and Greed," pp. 118-143.

Jung argued that the North Korean case “generally” supported his diversionary target theory because North Korea was in decline, it was isolated, and the Kims faced challenges from the KPA. This forced the Kims to initiate the nuclear crisis in the early 1990s. However, Jung appeared to be a bit hesitant about his conclusion because he later claimed that without access to North Korean documents he was unable “to reach a conclusion about whether North Korea’s initiation of crisis in 1993 was driven by its leader’s strategic calculation of domestic and foreign conditions.” That said, Jung relied on Joel Wit, Daniel Poneman, and Robert Gallucci’s work to support the argument that the Kims used external threats to consolidate power, call for more sacrifices, and eliminate the opposition. According to this view, Kim Jong-il withdrew from the NPT in 1993 to “assert his authority over conservatives throughout the party, the government, and the military.” Kim had no choice but to apply diversionary target theory because he lacked legitimacy and the economy was failing and he needed a foreign scapegoat to blame for his failures.<sup>293</sup> As noted above, Michishita challenged this argument by suggesting Kim used his military-diplomatic campaigns to trade his “military capabilities for diplomatic and economic gains.”<sup>294</sup> It was not about creating a diversion; it was all about devising a strategy to attract foreign aid. I also argue in Chapter 6, Kim had consolidated power by the time his father died in July 1994 and his core elites were united behind him as the North negotiated the nuclear deal in 1994.

There was another recent study that considered whether the Kims might have used diversionary theory by examining three cases of North Korea’s “‘hostile’ diplomatic and military activities” from 1960-2011. After examining North Korean provocations from the 1960s, the famine years of the 1990s, and Kim Jong-un’s succession, Robert Wallace concluded that diversionary theory applies only in “very limited circumstances” to explain North Korean provocations. He admitted it was more credible to argue that external pressure led to Pyongyang’s hostile actions, such as combined U.S.-South Korea military

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<sup>293</sup> Jung, “Fear and Greed,” pp. 161-167.

<sup>294</sup> Michishita, *North Korea’s Military-Diplomatic Campaigns*, pp. 187-188.



exercises and other activities associated with Seoul.<sup>295</sup> Moreover, even though Wallace's case studies did not include the Korean War, his brief coverage of North Korea after liberation in August 1945 noted that the "four groups [factions] united themselves into a single organization," and the KWP "was solidified during the Korean War period."<sup>296</sup> This suggests if Wallace had also considered the Korean War as part of his study, then he may have been more careful in applying diversionary theory to North Korean provocations.

### **2.2.8.3 Domestic Stability Driving North Korean Provocations**

Finally, the most recent study of North Korean provocations was done by Ken Gause in August 2015. Although he briefly addresses provocations from the 1960s to 2009, his main focus is on understanding Kim Jong-un's calculus for provocations and highlighting the regime's escalation dynamics and decision-making. First, he agrees with Michishita by repeating that "North Korea's policy objectives have changed significantly over time – from ambitious, aggressive, and hostile ones in the 1960s, to more defensive and reactionary ones in the 1990s onwards (with the exception of the 2010 events)." Second, although he claims "North Korea's military actions have been consistent with its policy objectives," he fails to discuss what those policy aims were for these provocations. Third, he argues North Koreans chose the locations for their provocation based on local military advantage and their ability to control escalation. However, it is arguable whether North Korea enjoyed military advantage in the DMZ where the landmine incident occurred on October 4, 2015,<sup>297</sup> or even at sea (e.g., use of covert action against the Cheonan in March

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<sup>295</sup> Robert Daniel Wallace, "The Determinants of Conflict: North Korea's Foreign Policy Choices, 1960-2011," (PhD diss., Kansas State University, 2014), pp. 195-197. Wallace examined provocations during the 1960s, the famine years of the 1990s, and second regime succession. He found the provocations in the 1960s failed to support diversionary theory while the other two cases seemed to support it.

<sup>296</sup> Wallace, "The Determinants of Conflict," p. 38.

<sup>297</sup> Choe Sang-hun, "South Korea Accuses the North After Land Mines Maim Two Soldiers in DMZ," August, 10, 2015, [http://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/11/world/asia/north-korea-placed-mines-that-maimed-2-south-korean-soldiers-at-dmz-seoul-says.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/11/world/asia/north-korea-placed-mines-that-maimed-2-south-korean-soldiers-at-dmz-seoul-says.html?_r=0) *New York Times* (accessed August 21, 2015).

2010). These two cases show the element of surprise also seems to be a major factor in North Korea's provocation calculus.<sup>298</sup>

Although Gause mentions the intense and violent period of provocations during the late 1960s, the only explanation he offers for the provocations was the fact the North Korean leadership had "coalesced around Kim Il-sung" after he had purged the Kapsan faction who opposed Kim Jong-il's succession in the mid-1960s.<sup>299</sup> With the exception of the Panmunjom ax murders in 1976, he viewed the 1970s as a "quiet decade," whereas the 1980s was viewed as a return of violent provocations. Gause claimed Kim Jong-il may have resorted to violence in the 1980s to demonstrate his leadership acumen as he assumed more power to run the "day-to-day operations of the regime."<sup>300</sup> After Kim's death in July 1994, Gause argued Kim Jong-il began to conduct provocations at sea from the mid-1990s to the 2000s. He characterized these years as a time when "North Korea began to crystalize its relationship with the South around the idea of acquiring a bargaining chip." As noted by others, North Korea used the "threat of violence" to extract rewards from Seoul. However, Gause's "major conclusion" was that during the reigns of Kim Il-sung and his son, *there were no provocations during periods of domestic instability*.<sup>301</sup> As a result, he concluded that Kim Jong-un was also unlikely to initiate provocations during "a period of turmoil or transition within the leadership."<sup>302</sup> According to this assertion, Kim Jong-un must have consolidated his power by the time the landmine incident occurred in August 2015. That said, Gause seems to contradict himself by arguing that the Cheonan sinking occurred because Pyongyang was "engaged in a serious internal struggle tied to the Supreme Leader or the transfer of power."<sup>303</sup> Moreover, when the North Koreans attacked a South Korean Navy

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<sup>298</sup> Ken E. Gause, "North Korea's Provocation and Escalation Calculus: Dealing with the Kim Jong-un Regime," CNA Analysis & Solutions, August 2015, pp. 7-52.

<sup>299</sup> Gause, "North Korea's Provocation and Escalation Calculus," p. 7. According to Michishita, in 1966 Kim was still attempting to consolidate his power. However, by May 1967, he had purged Pak Kum-chol, who was critical of Kim's militarization of North Korea, and established a "monolithic ideological system."

<sup>300</sup> Gause, "North Korea's Provocation and Escalation Calculus," p. 8.

<sup>301</sup> Gause, "North Korea's Provocation and Escalation Calculus," pp. 7-10.

<sup>302</sup> Gause, "North Korea's Provocation and Escalation Calculus," p. 51.

<sup>303</sup> Gause, "North Korea's Provocation and Escalation Calculus," p. 24.

patrol ship in January 1967, Kim Il-sung was still attempting to purge the Kapsan faction.<sup>304</sup>

In sum, there are various explanations for North Korean provocations but they lack sufficient explanatory power. More importantly, all of these studies begin their examination in the 1960s and that may have led to premature conclusions. In other words, the genesis of provocations was not the mid-1960s, but prior to the Korean War. With this temporal framing, it is clear more research needs to be done to understand North Korea's provocations, and the application of smart power framework using a multi-case study from the Korean War to 2015 offers a unique perspective.

### **2.3 Research Problem and Question**

The review of the literature suggests there is no consensus in the existing literature as to why North Korea continues to survive and many have lost their explanatory power. Moreover, existing efforts to understand North Korea's provocations also revealed more analytical gaps. Hence, my sense is that the application of smart power offers a fresh perspective on how North Korea survives. Based on the research problem identified and the evidence provided above, I believe it is worth the effort to examine the possibility of this assertion, and therefore the research question of this thesis is as follows:

Given that there is no consensus on how North Korea survives and why it conducts provocations; *does the concept of smart power offer an alternative explanation for North Korea's resilience?*

This research question is ultimately about telling a "new story" to gain a better understanding of the regime, and how it is likely to meet the challenges it will face in the future. I will conduct this examination by focusing on the application of smart power as an analytical tool, and this thesis hopes to bring scholarly focus to an alternative explanation to the problem of understanding the Kim regime in North Korea. More importantly, I argue this approach has the

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<sup>304</sup> Michishita, *North Korea's Military-Diplomatic Campaigns*, p. 31.

potential to be transferable to explain how other authoritarian regimes manage to be so resilient in spite of the many challenges facing them and what they perceive as a hostile Western world led by the U.S.

## **2.4 The Use of Smart Power as Original Contribution to Knowledge**

It may be counterintuitive for some North Korea observers (and others) to contemplate the Kims using smart power since we have seen how many observers focus on its coercive use of power. Perhaps the same could be said of Russia and Iran. For example, in 2011, Lada L. Roslycky argued that Russia was using smart power – “a combination of hard military power and soft power operations” – to encourage separatism in several countries in the Black Sea region. However, she lamented that security analysts still tend to focus on traditional hard power concepts, and this lack of imagination has “led to opaqueness in the concept of soft power” and how authoritarian states use it to gain power. As a result, her analytical effort fails to consider Nye’s smart power theory holistically and focuses mostly on how Russia uses its soft power tools to “build trust and loyalty” with the separatists in the Crimea.<sup>305</sup>

With respect to Iran, Michael Eisenstadt has recently published a revised second edition of his earlier work (2011) on Iran’s strategic culture in November 2015. He presented his latest edition as an “attempt to convey the essential elements of the strategic culture of the IRI [Islamic Republic of Iran]” to allow the U.S. to have a correct understanding of Iran. This would allow it to respond more effectively to the threats posed by Iran. He then argued, “The IRI has traditionally pursued a mixed soft/hard power national security that prioritized soft power over hard power.” Eisenstadt also laments that U.S. strategists and policymakers are fixated on Iran’s hard power resources but Tehran “places greater emphasis on guile than on brute force, and on soft power than on hard

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<sup>305</sup> Lada L. Roslycky, “Russia’s smart power in Crimea: sowing the seeds of trust,” *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, Vol. 11, No. 3, September 2011, pp. 299-312. Roslycky only mentions Russia’s Black Sea Fleet as representing Russia’s hard power but fails to explain how it is being used as a hard power resource.

power.”<sup>306</sup> Later he states, “While Iran has traditionally emphasized soft power, it has not ignored its ‘hard power’ assets, as indicated by its proxy warfare capabilities, its guerrilla navy, its robust missile forces, and its nuclear program.” He cites Iran’s recent commitment of troops to Syria and Iraq as an example of Iran using “hard power in certain situations.”<sup>307</sup> In other words, Eisenstadt also fails to use Nye’s smart power theory as a framework to assess Iran’s behavior and focuses primarily on Tehran’s use of soft power. This is not surprising. In 2011, Mai’a Davis Cross argued that while interest in smart power theory is growing, it is “useless” as an analytical tool and thus “smart power still waits on the sidelines of academic debates.” Her own aim is to critique Nye’s work to “make smart power more analytically useful,” and evaluate Europe’s capacity to wield soft and smart power.<sup>308</sup>

While Cross provided useful comments about some of the shortcomings of Nye’s smart power theory and clarified some of his concepts, she overlooked his claim that “a smart power strategy provides the answers to five questions,” (addressed in Chapter 1), which can form the basis for smart power analysis. More importantly, she is unclear about her own analytical framework for smart power that can be transferable because she attempts to show it by merely examining Europe’s capacity to wield smart and soft power.<sup>309</sup> One would have to do something similar for other cases but there is no analytical foundation to begin the work, such as Nye’s five questions. This preliminary review regarding smart power theory indicates scholars tend to believe over reliance on hard power to assess authoritarian state’s behavior is problematic (I agree), but they appear to focus too much on the elements of soft power and fail to fully consider how soft and hard power are used in tandem to achieve desired outcomes. Additionally, more research needs to be done to apply Nye’s analytical

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<sup>306</sup> Michael Eisenstadt, “The Strategic Culture of the Islamic Republic of Iran: Religion, Expediency, and Soft Power in an Era of Disruptive Change,” *Middle East Studies [MES] at the Marine Corps University*, MES Monographs No. 7, November 2015, pp. 1-12.

<sup>307</sup> Eisenstadt, “The Strategic Culture of the Islamic Republic of Iran,” p. 15.

<sup>308</sup> Mai’a K. Davis Cross, “Europe, a smart power?,” *International Politics*, Vol. 48, No. 6, 2011, pp. 691-698.

<sup>309</sup> Cross, “Europe, a smart power?,” pp. 699-704.

framework and whether authoritarian (as well as other) states (and non-state actors) are using smart power.

In the case of North Korea, I argue that holistic application of Nye's concept of smart power can demonstrate how North Korea has learned (and sometimes made mistakes) how to successfully employ it to survive. I will begin by briefly revisiting Nye's concept of smart power. As defined in Chapter 1, Nye defines smart power as the "ability to combine hard and soft power resources into effective strategies."<sup>310</sup> This means *any* state can use smart power, especially small and weak states like North Korea. The essence of the concept is resolving the challenge of power conversion, and this requires an understanding of North Korea's full range of power resources. This means North Korean leaders must be able to combine their power resources effectively in various situations,<sup>311</sup> and this demands acquiring contextual intelligence needed to understand the evolving situation. Without proper knowledge of the situation, it would be difficult for North Korea to identify the proper mix of hard and soft power so they end up reinforcing each other to consistently achieve its desired outcomes. More importantly, this suggests North Korea cannot exercise smart power with hard power alone; it also requires soft power.<sup>312</sup> This study will apply these concepts in various cases from the early ruling period of Kim Il-sung to that of Kim Jong-un by focusing on the outcomes of provocations and whether the Kims were capable of exercising good strategy and leadership to achieve their aims.

## 2.5 Designing a Conceptual Framework

The review and critique of the literature have provided a comprehensive list of explanatory variables regarding the survival of North Korea, which I will call North Korea's survival tools. This does not mean these tools are only for regime survival but, when used effectively, they allow North Korea to achieve greater independence to pursue its own style of socialism, and sometimes punch far above its weight and take center stage in world affairs. The origin of

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<sup>310</sup> Nye, *The Future of Power*, pp. 22-23.

<sup>311</sup> Nye, *The Future of Power*, p. 23.

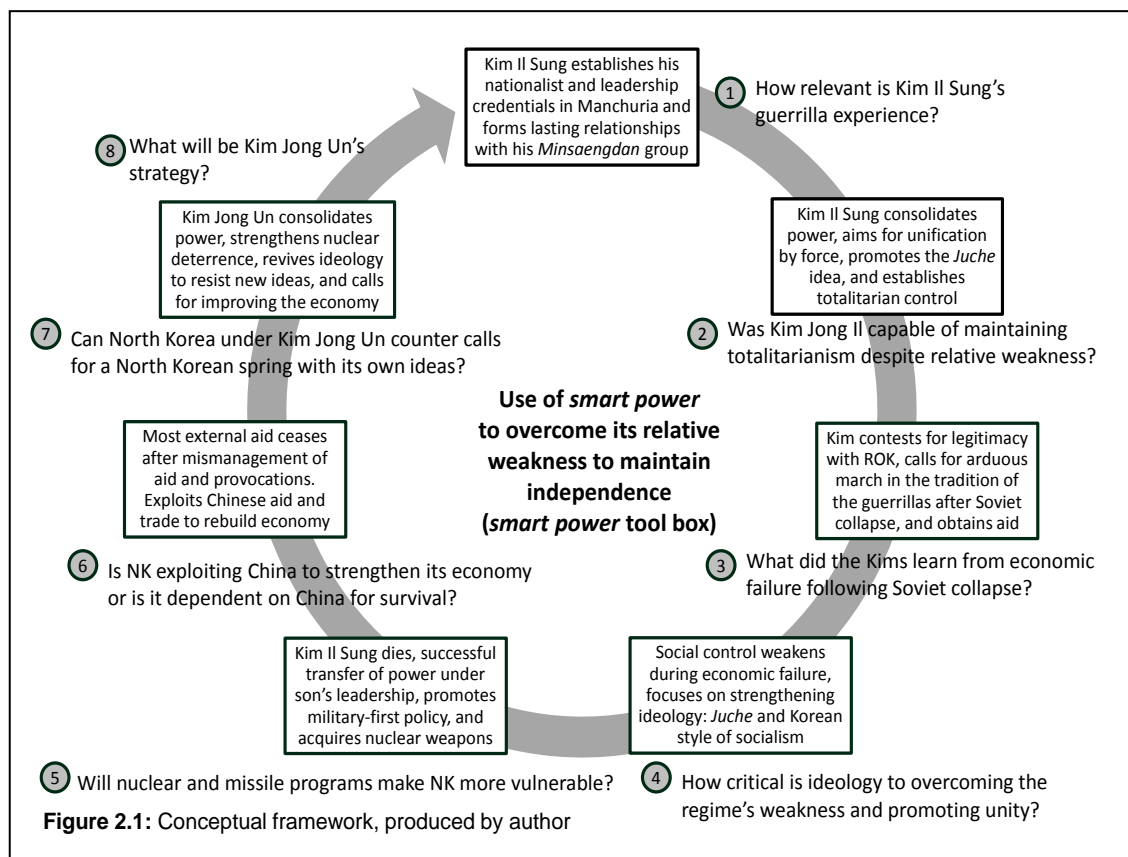
<sup>312</sup> Nye, *The Future of Power*, p. 8.

North Korea's development of these tools began with Kim Il-sung's anti-Japanese guerrilla struggle in Manchuria, but more tools were added to the tool box as Kim consolidated his power after the Korean War and contested for legitimacy on the Korean Peninsula with several South Korean leaders. When Kim Il-sung died in July 1994, he conveyed to his son his guerrilla and totalitarian legacies based on the cult of personality. Afterward, Kim Jong-il unexpectedly rose to the challenge to survive a "constellation of forces" that threatened his regime as he simultaneously faced the collapse of the Soviet Union, the death of his father, and the failure of North Korea's economy.

Although North Korea's traditional benefactors, China and the Soviet Union, abandoned the Kims for South Korea in the early 1990s, Kim Jong-il learned to leverage his nuclear program to maximize foreign aid and attempted to mobilize the population for the arduous march. Kim was dogmatic in his belief in the *Juche* ideology but also pragmatic enough to know the common people in North Korea needed some coping mechanisms to survive the famine years. In the process of learning how to lead North Korea, Kim Jong-il and his core elites effectively developed a smart power strategy based on a cycle of provocations to extract unconditional foreign aid and periodically basked in the international spotlight. Kim accomplished this by exploiting South Korean, Japanese and American fears of North Korea's collapse, and threats from its nuclear and missile programs. Surprisingly, Kim and his negotiators were capable of seizing engagement opportunities to build enough trust to achieve desired outcomes.

Today, his third son Kim Jong-un has inherited North Korea, but there is ongoing debate about what kind of system he inherited and questions also abound about how resilient the North will be with an inexperienced leader as more ideas and information penetrate North Korea from the outside. Ultimately, Kim Jong-un's ability to exercise smart power could determine whether he is capable of leading North Korea. In order to discover whether he is capable of doing so requires an in-depth study of the three Kims' rule of North Korea, with special emphasis on determining whether they were successful in achieving desired outcomes. Therefore, the conceptual framework for this study uses the

qualitative research methodology of case studies by examining the enabling research questions identified at the beginning of Chapter 1. The conceptual framework is highlighted in Figure 2.1 below. It describes the key events that occurred in North Korea's history which are associated with the question of North Korea's survival. It begins with Kim Il-sung's anti-Japanese guerrilla experience in Manchuria and ends with Kim Jong-un's attempts to consolidate his power after the death of Kim Jong-il in December 2011. It also highlights the seven supporting questions that were generated by examining the existing explanations of North Korea's survival. Finally, the framework highlights the research question that the Kims have used various survival tools to support their smart power strategies.



## 2.6 Summary

The focus of the study will be examining the outcomes of North Korean strategy over time. The review of the literature suggests, for the *first time*, an in-depth study of provocations will be conducted from the Korean War to 2015.



The study will also apply, for the *first time*, Nye's smart power theory as an analytical framework to determine how an authoritarian regime like North Korea converted its relatively limited power resources into successful outcomes. Having said that, the study acknowledges that each of the seven supporting questions offers only a partial explanation to the question of North Korean survival, but when considered holistically they complement our multi-case study of the Kim Dynasty. As I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, smart power in essence requires good strategy and leadership to convert resources into power that can secure desired outcomes.<sup>313</sup> The question is: Are the Kims capable of exercising good strategy and leadership? Some of the discussions above (e.g., extracting aid during the famine years and resolution of the BDA issue) suggest this is a reasonable proposition even under duress, which needs to be fully developed in the coming chapters. Finally, a brief review of recent works on Iran and Russia's use of power suggests additional research needs to be done by using Nye's smart power as an analytical tool and that could reveal significant findings – both might be using smart power, not using soft and hard power disparately. This also raises the question whether more work can be done to improve Nye's smart power theory as an analytical framework. The next chapter will discuss the research methodology to explain how it will meet the aims and objectives of this study.

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<sup>313</sup> Nye, *The Future of Power*, p. 8.

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## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

*Their achievement was sufficiently unprecedented to attract an enduring group of adherents away from competing modes of scientific activity. Simultaneously, it was sufficiently open-ended to leave all sorts of problems for the redefined group of practitioners to resolve. Achievements that share these two characteristics I shall henceforth refer to as 'paradigms.'*<sup>1</sup>

- Thomas Kuhn

#### 3.1 Introduction and Overview

The aims of this multi-case study<sup>2</sup> are to raise the level of understanding about how the Kims have managed to survive despite the growing international pressure; to offer North Korea's use of smart power as an alternative explanation for its survival; and to recommend alternative policy strategies to address the North Korea problem. In search of understanding this problem,<sup>3</sup> the study focuses on the research question, given that there is no consensus on how North Korea survives and why it conducts provocations; *does the concept of smart power offer an alternative explanation for North Korea's resilience?* This chapter depicts the study's research methodology to answer the research question by considering the following areas: (a) rationale for research design, (b) rationale for multi-case approach, (c) research strategies and samples, (d) summary of research design, (e) data analysis and synthesis, (f) trustworthiness, and (g) limitations and delimitations of the study.<sup>4</sup>

#### 3.2 Rationale for Qualitative Research Design<sup>5</sup>

The qualitative research method is normally used to provide a thorough understanding of the research topic by incorporating the views of the study's participants and the "context in which they live." It is helpful for "exploring new

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Enlarged (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago press, 1970), p. 10.

<sup>2</sup> Yin, *Case Study Research*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., p. 46.

<sup>3</sup> Bloomberg and Volpe, *Completing Your Qualitative Dissertation*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., p. 118.

<sup>4</sup> Bloomberg and Volpe, *Completing Your Qualitative Dissertation*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., p. 118.

<sup>5</sup> Used same sub-section title from Bloomberg and Volpe, p.118.

topics or understanding complex issues; for explaining people's beliefs and behaviour; and for identifying the social or cultural norms of a culture or society." In short, qualitative research is well suited to address "'why' questions to explain and understand issues or 'how' questions that describe processes or behaviour." Moreover, the following aims of qualitative research supports the study's aim to gain a higher-level of understanding of the Kim regime and how it continues to survive despite its relative weakness.<sup>6</sup>

- Understand from the participants' perspective, "behaviour, beliefs, opinions and emotions"
- Understand processes, such as how societies formulate policy decisions
- Reveal the meaning that societies give to their past
- Understand how people interact socially and their shared norms and values
- Identify the context in which "social, cultural, economic or physical" movements occur
- Provide a "voice to the issues of a certain study population"
- Offer "depth, detail, nuance and context" to complex issues
- Study "in detail sensitive topics"
- Research topics that "may be too complex or hidden" to be examined quantitatively<sup>7</sup>

These aims contrast with the quantitative research method whose purpose is to "quantify a research problem, to measure and count issues and then to generalize these findings to a broader population." The generalization of the findings is possible because the sampling is random, which is intended to provide "a study population that is representative of the general population." It is commonly acknowledged that the larger the sample size, the more valid the findings are likely to be, and the outcomes of the quantitative study would "lead to the identification of statistical trends, patterns, averages, frequencies or

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<sup>6</sup> Monique Hennink, Inge Hutter, and Ajay Bailey, *Qualitative Research Methods* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2011), p. 10.

<sup>7</sup> Hennink, Hutter, and Bailey, *Qualitative Research Methods*, p. 10.

correlations.”<sup>8</sup> However, it is my contention that using quantitative research methods is unlikely to bring forth the quality of data necessary to address the purpose of the research. Therefore, the aims of qualitative research methods identified above are better suited for this study.

### **3.3 Rationale for Multi-case Methodology**

According to Bloomberg and Volpe, there are five traditional approaches for qualitative research methods. They include “case study, ethnography, phenomenology, grounded theory, and narrative research.” First, ethnography focuses on lengthy observations of the targeted population, frequently involving the researcher becoming immersed in the culture and everyday life with the goal of producing a complete “cultural portrait.” Second, phenomenology focuses on illustrating the commonality among all participants with the aim of identifying the main themes of the participants’ “lived experience.” This is accomplished by the researcher being deeply involved with a small group of participants for a “prolonged engagement” to interpret the meaning of the lived experience. Third, grounded theory aims to “generate or discover a theory of a process, an action, or an interaction grounded in the views of the research participants.” The theory is grounded by the data that are observed and collected about the participants over multiple stages. The result is either new theory from the data or modification or extension of existing theory. Fourth, narrative research focuses on the “experiences as expressed in lived and told stories of individuals or cultures.” This tradition examines the lives of one or more people by the researcher retelling the story or stories through a “narrative chronology” to present the significance of the experience(s).<sup>9</sup>

This study will touch upon the lives of the three Kims, but it is not intended to be a life story – a narrative research or biography – of the three Kims. The focus is on learning more about how North Korea continues to survive. The first three approaches mentioned above are not feasible since I do not have access to “participants” required to address the research question. I

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<sup>8</sup> Hennink, Hutter, and Bailey, *Qualitative Research Methods*, pp. 16-17.

<sup>9</sup> Bloomberg and Volpe, *Completing Your Qualitative Dissertation*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., pp. 30-34.

am left with the final qualitative research approach: the case study method. This last approach examines “the bounded system (or systems) over time through in-depth data collection methods, involving multiple data sources.” It comprises of providing “detailed descriptions of a setting and its participants, accompanied by an analysis of the data for themes, patterns, and issues.”<sup>10</sup> As noted earlier in Chapter 1, Yin’s approach to case studies also reaffirmed that it is an appropriate method for addressing how and why questions. Moreover, the enabling research questions will also help guide me to the relevant information required for studying how North Korea continues to survive.<sup>11</sup>

### 3.4 Research Strategies

According to Norman Blaikie, research strategies provide “logic, or a set of procedures, for answering research questions, particularly ‘what’ and ‘why’ questions.” More importantly, he argues that “knowledge can only be advanced in the social sciences by using one or a combination of four research strategies, the Inductive, Deductive, Retroductive and Abductive.”<sup>12</sup> This study will rely primarily on the deductive strategy, but will also utilize the remaining three strategies throughout. First, the inductive research strategy aims to establish “limited generalizations about the distribution of, and patterns of association amongst, observed or measured characteristics of individuals and social phenomena.” What this means for the research question is that all of the existing explanations of North Korea’s survival that the study has uncovered during the literature review allow this research to draw generalizations about the research question, and that helps us to look for those characteristics during our data collection effort. This strategy acknowledges it is possible that during the course of the research we could “stumble across some other characteristics”<sup>13</sup> of how North Korea survives.

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<sup>10</sup> Hennink, Hutter, and Bailey, *Qualitative Research Methods*, p. 31.

<sup>11</sup> Yin, *Case Study Research*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., p. 22.

<sup>12</sup> Norman Blaikie, *Designing Social Research*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2010), p. 18.

<sup>13</sup> Blaikie, *Designing Social Research*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., p. 83.

While inductive strategy is a necessary step to establish patterns and characteristics related to the research question, other strategies are needed to answer why<sup>14</sup> or how<sup>15</sup> questions. The next step is to explain the patterns or characteristics that others have observed and the deductive research strategy aims to do this by “using an existing theory, or inventing a new theory.” The aim “is to find an explanation for an association between two [or more] concepts by proposing a theory, the relevance of which can be tested.” In this study, some of the association for the various explanations for why North Korea survives is identified by the inductive strategy,<sup>16</sup> and the deductive strategy is used to consider smart power theory as an alternative explanation. However, the ultimate goal of deductive strategy is to find the truth, but Blaikie claims to be more pragmatic and strives for “one amongst other possible explanations.”<sup>17</sup>

Since we now have smart power theory as well as other explanations for North Korea’s survival, we will have to rely on the retroductive strategy to explain the “observed regularities.” This requires collecting the data and walking them back to consider which of the explanations can best illuminate the observed regularities. The challenge has always been discovering “the structures and mechanisms that are proposed to explain the observed regularities.” However, our review of the literature has already led to several ideas that attempt to explain how North Korea survives, and smart power theory could also offer more than one interpretation to explain the data collected. Nevertheless, this strategy requires “disciplined scientific thinking aided by creative imagination, intuition, and guesswork.”<sup>18</sup>

Despite the challenge, the abductive strategy could support the aims of both the retroductive and deductive strategies by enhancing our understanding of North Korea with special emphasis on determining the reasons for North Korea’s actions. This is accomplished by examining the North Korean “meanings and interpretations, the motives and intentions, that [the North

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<sup>14</sup> Blaikie, *Designing Social Research*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., p. 85.

<sup>15</sup> Blaikie, *Designing Social Research*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., p. 105.

<sup>16</sup> Blaikie, *Designing Social Research*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., p. 85.

<sup>17</sup> Blaikie, *Designing Social Research*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., p. 87.

<sup>18</sup> Blaikie, *Designing Social Research*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., p. 87.

Korean] people use in their everyday lives, and which direct their behavior.” In short, it aims to describe the North Korean experience from the inside, understand the way they perceive the world, and discover why they behave the way they do.<sup>19</sup>

Although there are limits to interpreting the North’s behavior, the North Koreans often attempt to justify their actions. For instance, the findings indicate many of the provocations during the Cold War from the Korean War<sup>20</sup> to the Korean Airline (KAL) 858 bombing<sup>21</sup> were motivated by the Kims’ desire for reunification. Although the U.S. denies it has a hostile policy toward North Korea, Pyongyang justifies many of its actions by citing U.S. hostile policy. In fact, on August 31, 2012, Pyongyang explained why it believes U.S. hostile policy is the main obstacle to peace and stability in Korea.<sup>22</sup> Within North Korea, allegations of U.S. hostile policy were broadcast by the regime to create a siege mentality,<sup>23</sup> and when it attempted to regain control of the markets in 2009 the people resisted to protect their assets.<sup>24</sup> However, there are other cases when the regime’s justification for its behavior is beyond belief or it denies responsibility. This was the case when Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il both blamed unidentified officials and soldiers for the Blue House raid<sup>25</sup> and the kidnapping of Japanese citizens respectively.<sup>26</sup> North Korea also refused to acknowledge the KAL 858 bombing and the Cheonan sinking.<sup>27</sup> As a result, these cases do require an interpretation of North Korean behavior. It is not my intention to claim I have discovered a new scientific method to interpret their behavior through this study. What I have shown is that, abductive strategy,

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<sup>19</sup> Blaikie, *Designing Social Research*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., p. 89.

<sup>20</sup> Wada Haruki, *The Korean War: An International History* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), pp. 12-13.

<sup>21</sup> Kim Hyun Hee, *The Tears of My Soul* (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1993), pp. 83-84.

<sup>22</sup> KCNA, “DPRK Terms U.S. Hostile Policy Main Obstacle in Resolving Nuclear Issue,” August 31, 2012, <http://www.kcna.co.jp/index-e.htm> (accessed November 11, 2014).

<sup>23</sup> Mansourov, “North Korea Stressed,” p. 89.

<sup>24</sup> Lankov, *The Real North Korea*, p. 129.

<sup>25</sup> Ostermann and Person, eds., *The Rise and Fall of Détente on the Korean Peninsula*, pp. 10-13.

<sup>26</sup> Dudden, *Troubled Apologies*, pp. 50-55.

<sup>27</sup> Victor Cha and Ellen Kim, “U.S.-Korea Relations: The Sinking of the Cheonan,” *Comparative Connections*, September 2012 [http://csis.org/files/publication/1202qus\\_korea.pdf](http://csis.org/files/publication/1202qus_korea.pdf) (accessed July 15, 2013).



when used as an iterative process, can be used as a hypothesis to help provide additional insights on the motives and meanings of the North's actions.<sup>28</sup>

### **3.5 Research Design, Case Selection, and Information Needed**

The study's research design (see Figure 3.1) relies on the seven enabling research questions derived from the existing explanatory factors for North Korea's survival to guide the collection effort for this study. The strategy begins by examining how Kim Il-sung consolidated his power and laid the foundation for a totalitarian regime in North Korea. It will also examine the other explanatory factors for North Korea's survival discussed in Chapters 1 and 2 to help define the ruling style of Kim Il-sung and how he attempted to pass it on to Kim Jong-il after his death. The understanding of the dynastic power transition between the two Kims and the process of Kim Jong-il's power consolidation will allow us to make some deductions about the elements of continuity and change with respect to the survival tools that Kim Jong-il eventually adopted for himself. A similar approach will be used to understand Kim Jong-un's meteoric rise after the death of his father to get a better sense of his developing ruling style based on his key actions to consolidate power.

After examining the survival tools of the three Kims, I will focus on data collection for the multi-case study. According to Robert Yin, there are six most commonly used sources of information for cases studies. They include "documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant-observation, and physical artifacts."<sup>29</sup> I will primarily use two of the six sources of information to support my multi-case study. First, I will rely on documentary information, such as letters, memoranda, speeches, announcements, minutes of meetings, media reports, communiques, and other written reports of events. Yin argues that the most critical use of documents is "to corroborate and augment evidence from other sources." As a result, well-thought-out searches for key documents are important to any information collection plan.<sup>30</sup>

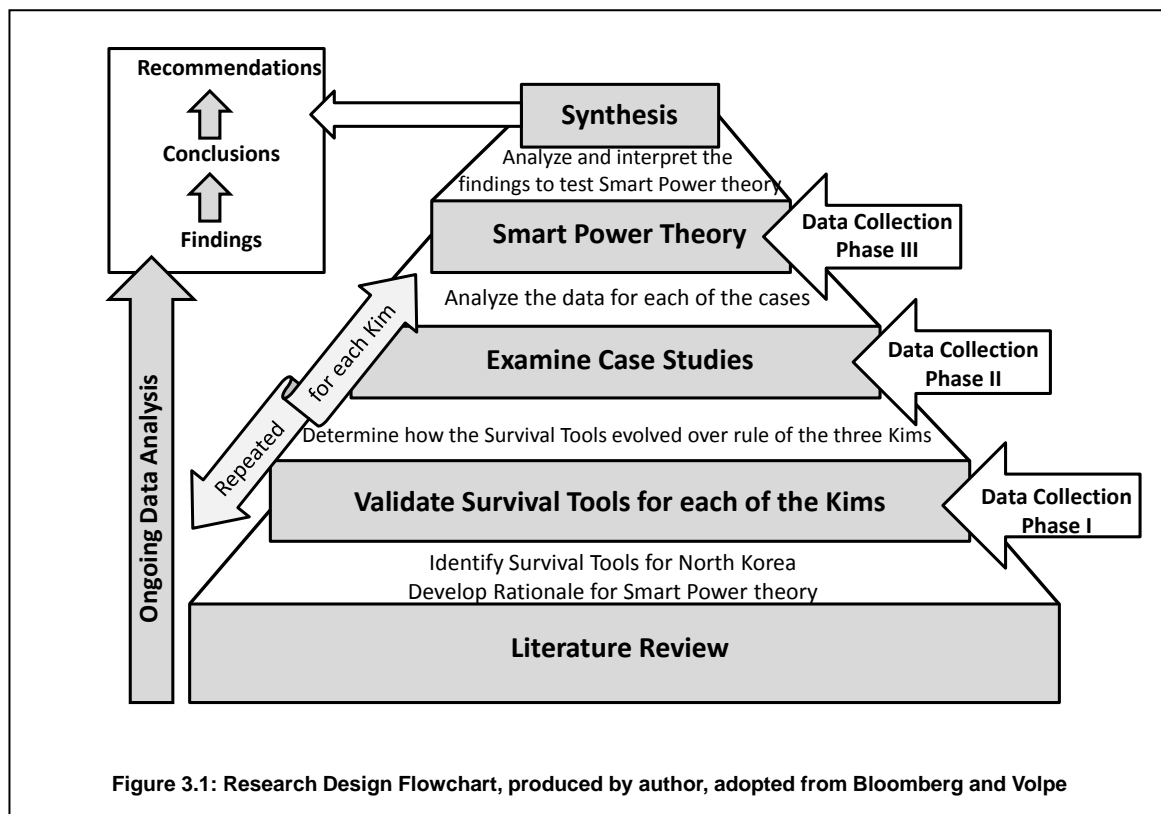
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<sup>28</sup> Blaikie, *Designing Social Research*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., p. 84.

<sup>29</sup> Yin, *Case Study Research*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., p. 85.

<sup>30</sup> Yin, *Case Study Research*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., pp. 87-88.

Second, archival records will also be relevant to this study, and include items such as service and organizational records, maps, charts, lists of names, surveys and personal records.<sup>31</sup> Sometimes they can be critical to a study, and this is likely to be the case for even an isolated society like North Korea as more archival records are being released from Eastern Europe, China and Russia. On the other hand, this study will not utilize interviews or physical artifacts, and envisions very limited use (if at all) of direct and participant observation of select events such as negotiations with the Korean People's Army at Panmunjom from 1997 to 1998 and as a member of the Six Party Talks from 2005 to 2006.



In addition, I will use life stories<sup>32</sup> that Yin mentions but chooses not to include as one of his six sources of information as well as various academic works that would meet the criteria of Catherine Marshall and Gretchen

<sup>31</sup> Yin, *Case Study Research*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., pp. 88-89.

<sup>32</sup> Yin, *Case Study Research*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., p. 85.

Rossman's historical analysis,<sup>33</sup> which Yin does not mention in his discussion of sources. Marshall and Rossman suggest that what Yin calls life stories is "a deliberate attempt to define the growth of a person in a cultural milieu and to make theoretical sense of it." The effort is on the needs of individuals and their experiences and how they attempt to cope with society. It is noted for examining how culture changes over time, especially from an insider's perspective of culture.<sup>34</sup> This is essential to our research design, and the same is true for historical analysis. In short, it is "a method of discovering, from records and accounts, what happened in the past." This goes beyond acquiring documents and archival records. It may also include examination of fiction, songs, poetry, folklore and opinions. More importantly, the purpose is to establish a "baseline or background" prior to conducting contemporary research. It may also reveal previously unexplored issues and others that may require reexamination "for which answers are not as definite as desired."<sup>35</sup>

As part of my information collection plan for this research, I have conducted targeted searches in databases ranging from the Columbia International Affairs Online (CIAO), CRS Reports, Digital National Security Archive, JSTOR, Praeger Security International Online, ProQuest, [North] Korean Central News Agency, Kim Il-sung's multi-Volume Work, National Intelligence University's Hughes Library Catalog and ebrary, National Archives at College Park, Maryland, North Korea International Documentation Project (NKIDP) at the Wilson Center, and United Nations Command's records and other relevant academic works. When the initial research is completed for each chapter on the Kims, the study will focus on identifying the tools each of them used to survive. The second step in the research design is to identify specific issues for each of the Kims that will demonstrate how they all attempted to exercise smart power to achieve the desired outcomes necessary for survival.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Catherine Marshall and Gretchen B. Rossman, *Designing Qualitative Research* (Newbury Park, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc., 1989), pp. 95-96.

<sup>34</sup> Marshall and Rossman, *Designing Qualitative Research*, pp. 96-97.

<sup>35</sup> Marshall and Rossman, *Designing Qualitative Research*, p. 95.

<sup>36</sup> Yin, *Case Study Research*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., p. 22.

As discussed in Chapter 1, my personal experience has led me to believe the Kim's might be using smart power to survive, and to compensate for that bias, the study's approach is to select the cases that will disprove the smart power theory. As suggested by Gary King, Robert Keohane, and Sidney Verba, I asked the question, "What evidence would convince us that we are wrong?"<sup>37</sup> and this approach is similar to the "crucial case" selection, where the "least-likely case" to achieve an expected outcome is selected, but unexpectedly validates the theory.<sup>38</sup> As a result, *the study's sampling focuses on cases that could validate the argument that North Korea is not using smart power.* In fact, on March 25, 2014, General Curtis Scaparrotti, Commander of U.S. Forces Korea (USFK), stated in his Congressional testimony, "The Kim Jong-un regime's overriding interest is ensuring its survival. To achieve this, North Korea employs a coercive strategy, using force or the threat of force in an attempt to influence the United States and South Korea."<sup>39</sup> My argument is that use of hard power is not the only way North Korea achieves its aims.

The third step in the research design is selecting the cases, and this required a review of Hannah Fischer's comprehensive list of North Korean provocations from her CRS Report *North Korean Provocative Actions, 1950-2007*.<sup>40</sup> However, since Fischer's report ends at March 2007, her work has been supplemented by the Center for Strategic and International Studies' (CSIS) list of major provocations from the 1960s to March 2010.<sup>41</sup> In order to identify provocations from April 2010 to August 2015, I have selected my own cases based on the definition of provocations identified in Chapter 1. Fischer's CRS report included over 160 provocations from 1950 to 2007, beginning with the

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<sup>37</sup> Gary King, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference In Qualitative Research* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), p. 19.

<sup>38</sup> John Gerring, *Case Study Research: Principles and Practices* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 115.

<sup>39</sup> Statement of General Curtis M. Scaparrotti, Commander, United Nations Command (UNC); Commander United States-Republic of Korea Combined Forces Command (CFC); and Commander, United States Forces Korea (USFK) before the Senate Armed Services Committee, March 25, 2014.

<sup>40</sup> Hannah Fischer, "North Korean Provocative Actions, 1950-2007," Congressional Research Service, April 20, 2007.

<sup>41</sup> Office of the Korea Chair, "Record of North Korea's Major Conventional Provocations since 1960s," Center for Strategic and International Studies, May 25, 2010.

Korean War, while the CSIS record listed only two provocations from 2007 to 2010 by using a different selection criterion – it had to result in casualties.<sup>42</sup>

To go beyond the CSIS study which ended with the sinking of the South Korean naval ship Cheonan in March 2010, however, the most obvious provocations that were not included in the two studies are the North Korean artillery attack on Yeonpyeong Island in November 2010, and the North Korean deployment of long-range missiles to threaten nuclear strikes on the U.S. with “smaller, lighter and diversified nuclear weapons in the Spring of 2013.”<sup>43</sup> I also needed to consider two failed space launches in April 2009 and April 2012, and a successful space launch in December 2012.<sup>44</sup> Moreover, North Korea conducted its second nuclear test in November 2009, a third in February 2013,<sup>45</sup> and a demonstration of force to threaten a nuclear ICBM launch against the U.S.<sup>46</sup> The overall trend of provocations highlighted in the chart below shows the years 1969, 1974, 1978-1981, 1987, 1997-1998, 2003, 2005, 2012-2013 appear to demonstrate higher levels of North Korean provocations and probably offer appropriate cases for this study. Finally, I considered the landmine incident that severely wounded two South Korean soldiers in the DMZ on August 4, 2015,<sup>47</sup> as the last case study. The fourth nuclear test (alleged H-bomb test) on January 3, 2016 will be addressed as a policy issue in Chapter 8 but will not be examined as a case study.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> The definition of terminology in Chapter 1 noted that the Center for Strategic and International Studies definition only focused on provocations that resulted in casualties which included “major armed conflicts, military/espionage incursions, border infractions, [and] acts of terrorism.” As a result, it omitted North Korean verbal rhetoric, kidnappings, and missile launches and nuclear tests.

<sup>43</sup> Eliot Elwar, “Op-Ed: North Korea Threatens US with nuclear strike on American cities,” *Digital Journal*, April 6, 2013, <http://digitaljournal.com/article/347381> (accessed June 21, 2013).

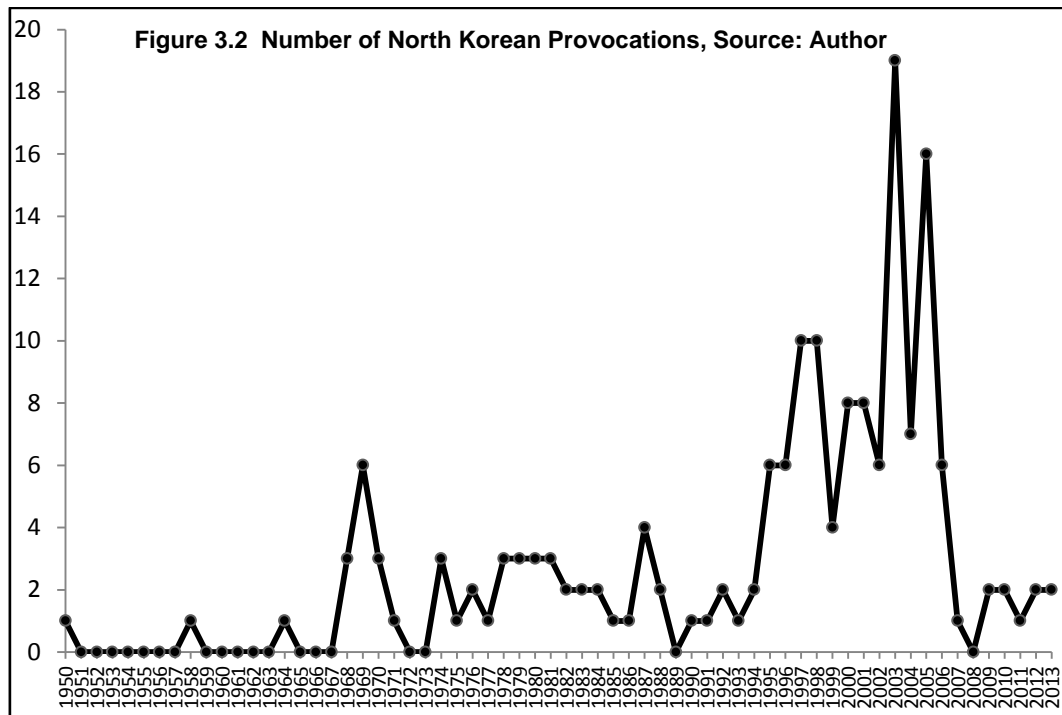
<sup>44</sup> Emma Chanlett-Avery and Ian E. Rinehart, “North Korea: U.S. Relations, Nuclear Diplomacy, and Internal Situation,” Congressional Research Service, January 15, 2014, p. 14.

<sup>45</sup> Chanlett-Avery and Rinehart, “North Korea,” January 15, 2014, p. 5.

<sup>46</sup> Dan Roberts and Justin McCurry, “U.S. defends military deployments in response to North Korea threats,” *The Guardian*, April 4, 2013, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/apr/04/us-north-korea-military-response> (accessed July 13, 2015).

<sup>47</sup> Choe, “South Korea Accuses the North After Land Mines Maim Two Soldiers in DMZ.”

<sup>48</sup> KCNA, “WPK Central Committee Issues Order to Conduct First H-Bomb Test,” January 6, 2016, <http://www.kcnawatch.co/newstream/1452124924-138163682/wpk-central-committee-issues-order-to-conduct-first-h-bomb-test/> (accessed January 9, 2016).



The question is which provocations should we consider for this study? In an attempt to minimize case selection bias, the multi-case study will focus on North Korea's use of hard power, which is plausible based on the realist assumption that the world is anarchic and the nation-state is the primary actor, and to preserve their interests, countries like North Korea will resort to the ultimate instrument of power – *force*.<sup>49</sup> The rationale is that if the smart power theory is valid then the study can safely assume that, even in cases where North Korea appears to use only variations of force, closer examination is likely to reveal the Kims simultaneously employed other power resources to achieve their objectives. If the study only examined one case, it might eventually discover the findings were an outlier but, by examining over ten cases with some variations in outcomes, it can mitigate this risk.<sup>50</sup> The examination of diverse cases should result in meaningful generalizations concerning North Korean provocations,<sup>51</sup> and for validating its use of smart power.

<sup>49</sup> Nye, *The Future of Power*, pp. 18-19.

<sup>50</sup> King, Keohane, and Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry*, p. 10.

<sup>51</sup> King, Keohane, and Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry*, p. 10.

The fourth step is to further delineate the categories of provocations to consider some variations of the use of force since this study defines it broadly to include activities such as military invasion, infiltration of armed agents and spies, terrorism, actions that undermine progress in major negotiations, and ballistic missile and nuclear tests.<sup>52</sup> This led to examining the definition from the discussion of interstate conflict behavior, and specifically those conflicts that eventually become militarized. Charles Gochman and Zeev Maoz's study on Militarized Interstate Disputes (MID) defines it "as a set of interactions between or among states involving *threats to use military force, displays of military force, or actual uses of military force.*"<sup>53</sup> While the overall study's dependent variable is regime survival, these three elements from the MID definition will be the multi-case study of provocations' *dependent variables* and this variance on the use of force will give it some flexibility to explain some deviations in use of force outcomes.<sup>54</sup> After considering these factors, the research ends up with approximately 50 cases where North Korea used force from 1948 to 2013, about 25 cases where it threatened the use of force, and roughly 30 cases where it displayed the use of force. The other incidents of provocations that do not fall into any variations of the use of force number about 60. They include the capture of North Korean spies, kidnapping of foreign citizens, discovery of infiltration tunnels in the DMZ, proliferation of arms and nuclear technology, and breakdown of nuclear negotiations.

Now that the initial assessment of the provocations using the MID definition is complete, the fifth and final step is to follow Robert Yin's recommendation and attempt to select the cases that "most likely illuminate" our research question.<sup>55</sup> The selection criteria for our cases will be: (1) the study needs a unit of analysis (case) from all three Kims; (2) the preponderance of the

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<sup>52</sup> Hannah Fischer, *North Korean Provocative Actions, 1950-2007*, CRS, 20 April 2007, p. CRS-1. For additional information, see definition of provocations in Chapter 1.

<sup>53</sup> Charles S. Gochman and Zeev Maoz, "Militarized Interstate Disputes, 1816-1976: Procedures, Patterns, and Insights," *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, December 1984: Vol. 28, No. 4, p. 587.

<sup>54</sup> King, Keohane, and Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry*, p. 129.

<sup>55</sup> Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications, 2009), p. 26.

evidence must demonstrate that the Kims and/or the core North Korean elites (i.e., members of Kim Il-sung's guerrilla band, and members of the Politburo and the National Defense Commission, etc.) deliberately planned and executed the provocation and it was not merely the result of unexpected happenstance (which would eliminate the two submarine incursions of 1996 and 1998); (3) use of kinetic force must have resulted in casualties; (4) and non-kinetic use of force (threat or displays of force) must have escalated the crisis beyond the Korean peninsula. This process resulted in the selection of over ten cases during the Kim family's rule of North Korea under one or some combination of the three Kims.<sup>56</sup> (see Table 3.1).

<b>Table 3.1 Select Cases of North Korean Provocations, 1950-2015</b>			
<b>Kims/Year(s)</b>	<b>Event</b>	<b>Details</b>	<b>MID Criteria</b>
Kim Il-sung (KIS) (1950-1953)	Korean War (case 1)	North Korean (NK) surprise attack on 25 June 1950 and United Nations intervention; conflict ends in Armistice in July 1953 (total U.S. casualties 157,530). <sup>57</sup>	Actual Use of Force
KIS 1968	North Korean attack on the Blue House (case 2); NK capture of USS Pueblo (case 3); North Korean Ulchin-Samchok raid (case 4)	NK attempted to assassinate President Park Chung Hee at the Blue House in Jan 1968; Attacked and seized USS. Pueblo with a crew of 83 in international waters also in January 1968; and conducted large scale military raids in South Korea at Ulchin and Samchok in October 1968. <sup>58</sup>	Actual Use of Force
KIS and Kim Jong-il (KJI) Transition 1976	Panmunjom Ax Murders (case 5)	NK soldiers attacked a U.S.-South Korean tree-trimming work team with axes at Panmunjom, killing 2 U.S. army officers and wounding 4 American enlisted men and 5 South Korean soldiers. <sup>59</sup>	Actual Use of Force

<sup>56</sup> Norman Blaikie, *Designing Social Research*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Polity Press, 2010), 190.

<sup>57</sup> Fischer, *North Korean Provocative Actions, 1950-2007*, p. CRS-3.

<sup>58</sup> Fischer, *North Korean Provocative Actions, 1950-2007*, p. CRS-4.

<sup>59</sup> Fischer, *North Korean Provocative Actions, 1950-2007*, p. CRS-6.



KIS and KJI <i>Transition</i> 1983 and 1987	Terrorism (Rangoon bombing in 1983 (case 6) and the 1987 bombing of KAL Flight 858 (case 7)	Bomb killed 17 senior ROK officials and injured 14 who were accompanying President Chun to Burma in October 1983; a bomb planted by two NK terrorists on Korean airliner in November 1987 kills 20 crew and 95 passengers aboard, in midair over the Andaman Sea off the coast of Burma. <sup>60</sup>	Actual Use of Force
KIS and KJI <i>Transition</i> 1994	North Korean Nuclear Weapons Development (First Nuclear Crisis) (case 8)	In March 1994, NK issued threat of war in an inter-Korean meeting at Panmunjom in response to Seoul mentioning the possibility of UN sanctions for its refusal to accept full international nuclear inspections. U.S. considered military strikes against NK nuclear facilities. <sup>61</sup>	Direct Threat to Use Military Force
KJI 2002	Second Nuclear Crisis 2002 (case 9)	Facing pressure to scrap a nuclear weapons program, NK warned U.S. in October 2002 it would take unspecified “tougher counteraction” if it did not accept talks. <sup>62</sup>	Implied Threat to Use Military Force
KJI and Kim Jong-un (KJU) <i>Transition</i> 2010	North Korean sinking of the Cheonan (case 10) and the shelling of Yeonpyeong Island (case 11)	Sinking of the Cheonan that killed 46 ROK sailors in March 2010; <sup>63</sup> NK shelling of Yeonpyeong island in November 2010 killed two ROK Marines and two ROK civilians. <sup>64</sup>	Actual Use of Force
KJU 2013	Deployment of long- range missiles to strike the U.S. (case 12)	In April 2013, NK moved more intermediate-range ballistic missiles to its east coast region. The ballistic missiles were pointed toward the U.S. just days after North Korea threatened a “merciless” nuclear military strike on the U.S. <sup>65</sup>	Display of Military Force

<sup>60</sup> Fischer, *North Korean Provocative Actions, 1950-2007*, p. CRS-8 and CRS-10.

<sup>61</sup> Fischer, *North Korean Provocative Actions, 1950-2007*, p. CRS-11.

<sup>62</sup> Fischer, *North Korean Provocative Actions, 1950-2007*, p. CRS-24.

<sup>63</sup> Office of the Korea Chair, “Record of North Korea’s Major Conventional Provocations since 1960s,” p. 5.

<sup>64</sup> Bruce E. Bechtol, Jr., *The Last Days of Kim Jong-Il: The North Korean Threat in a Changing Era* (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, 2013), p. 80.

<sup>65</sup> Eliot Elwar, Op-Ed: North Korea Threatens US with nuclear strike on American cities; *Digital Journal*, April 6, 2013, <http://digitaljournal.com/article/347381> (accessed 21 June 2013).

KJU 2015	Landmine Incident in the DMZ (case 13)	I will examine the most recent provocation – the August 4, 2015 landmine incident – that severely wounded two South Korean soldiers in the DMZ. After its investigation of the incident, the South Korean military accused the North of deliberately planting the mines near a South Korean army guard post. <sup>66</sup>	Actual Use of Force
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In sum, my research design and case selection will validate the smart power theory by attempting to disprove it since all of the cases include variants of hard power usage. One of the important questions of this study is whether the Kims were capable of exercising good strategy<sup>67</sup> and leadership.<sup>68</sup> That will be discussed in subsequent chapters, but a recent study by David Runciman highlighted that some authoritarian regimes learn faster than democratic ones, “particularly when it comes to avoiding the mistakes of the past.” The problem is that these autocratic regimes often assume “that the future will continue to resemble the past.”<sup>69</sup> What this suggests is that a significant miscalculation by Kim Jong-un, based on poor assumptions grounded in the past (e.g., no use of force by the U.S. no matter what the provocation), could lead to a surprise or even state failure.<sup>70</sup> In other words, he must have good contextual intelligence and eventually become a leader that can exercise leadership beyond his inherited position as the Supreme Leader.

### 3.6 Data Analysis and Synthesis

According to Bloomberg and Volpe, the synthesis of the findings “is the process of pulling everything together,” whereas analysis “splits the data apart.”

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<sup>66</sup> Choe, “South Korea Accuses the North After Land Mines Maim Two Soldiers in DMZ.”

<sup>67</sup> Joint Publication 1-02, *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, November 8, 2010, p. 251, defines strategy as, “A prudent idea or set of ideas for employing the instruments of national power in a synchronized and integrated fashion to achieve theater, national, and/or multinational objectives.

<sup>68</sup> ADP 6-22, *Army Leadership*, Headquarters, Department of the Army, August 2012, p.1, defines Leadership as “the process of influencing people by providing purpose, direction, and motivation to accomplish the mission and improve the organization.”

<sup>69</sup> David Runciman, *The Confidence Trap: A History of Democracy in Crisis from World War I to the Present* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), pp. xvi-xix.

<sup>70</sup> Runciman, *The Confidence Trap*, pp. xvi-xix.

This process begins by answering the research questions, cross-checking all sources to assess the findings, and validating my assumptions.<sup>71</sup> After completing my research, the findings suggest Kim Il-sung's smart power attempts only succeeded at the end when he transferred his power to his son, while Kim Jong-il was very successful in exercising it during a very difficult period in North Korea's history. More importantly, Kim Jong-un appears to have consolidated his power and seems to be learning how to exercise smart power based on the two provocations examined under his rule.

### **3.7 Issues of Trustworthiness**

The next issue is to determine how to end up with "good and convincing research," which is often equated with "credibility and dependability" in qualitative research.<sup>72</sup> The matter of credibility questions whether or not the research findings are accurate and credible, and thus the aim is "not to verify conclusions, but rather to test the validity of conclusions reached." The credibility of research will ultimately be determined by examining the methodology and how well it addresses the proposed research questions, and by reviewing the rigor and the quality of the interpretation of the findings. The issue of trustworthiness is also related to whether the findings are consistent and dependable with the acquired information. While the researcher may anticipate some inconsistencies in research, it must be well documented and clearly understood when they occur.<sup>73</sup>

The key to conducting dependable research is documenting "the rationale for all choices and decisions made during the research process," in order to demonstrate the "transparency of method... of how all the data were analyzed and interpreted." The final aspect of trustworthiness that is relevant to this study is transferability. It is the idea that "the reader determines whether and to what extent this particular phenomenon [the research topic] in this particular context can transfer to another particular context." Some have

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<sup>71</sup> Bloomberg and Volpe, *Completing Your Qualitative Dissertation*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., p. 111. Used same sub-section title as the reference.

<sup>72</sup> Bloomberg and Volpe, *Completing Your Qualitative Dissertation*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., p. 112.

<sup>73</sup> Bloomberg and Volpe, *Completing Your Qualitative Dissertation*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., pp. 125-126.

attempted to bring more clarity to this concept by reframing it as “context-bound extrapolations.” This is defined as “speculations on the likely applicability of findings to other situations under similar, but not identical, conditions.”<sup>74</sup> As discussed above, my own sense is that smart power theory can be applied to other authoritarian regimes, such as Iran and Russia, to determine how they achieve their desired outcomes.

### 3.8 Limitations and Delimitations

I understand that every study has some limitations, which are defined as “conditions that may weaken the study.” Some of these vulnerable conditions noted by previous researchers include selection bias of cases, determining suitable number of cases, over-reliance on particular sources of information, and general researcher bias.<sup>75</sup> I am also concerned about the suitability of the selected cases as well as the number of cases I have chosen for this research. Although the initial review of the literature has indicated North Korea is capable of using smart power (particularly during the nuclear crises) to survive, I have intentionally selected cases that would at the outset support a counter-argument (cases using variants of hard power) to guard against my own bias based on experience and observation that North Korea is capable of using smart power to survive. I attempt to avoid relying too much on certain sources of information by diversifying and combining several sources to compensate for weaknesses of some sources while utilizing the strengths of others.<sup>76</sup> However, due to the opaque nature of North Korea, some issues may depend on a particular source more than others. Moreover, I have chosen not to conduct interviews for this study because Nigel King and Christine Horrocks argue that the most important criterion for conducting this type of research is diversity. They stressed “a purely *ad hoc*, opportunistic sampling strategy is *not appropriate* [emphasis mine]; rather, the sample needs to relate in some systematic manner to the

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<sup>74</sup> Bloomberg and Volpe, *Completing Your Qualitative Dissertation*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., pp. 125-126.

<sup>75</sup> Bloomberg and Volpe, *Completing Your Qualitative Dissertation*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., p. 114. Used same sub-section title as the reference.

<sup>76</sup> Marshall and Rossman, *Designing Qualitative Research*, pp. 101-103.

social world and phenomena that a study seeks to throw light upon.”<sup>77</sup> As a result, a systematic approach would require interviews with at least former and current officials from all the 6PT countries, and that is unrealistic for this research.

Another limitation of the study is that I do not understand Japanese and Chinese, and my Korean language skills have atrophied significantly in recent years to the extent I am unable to process the unique vocabulary associated with this research topic in Korean. Thus, I have relied almost entirely on English sources of North Korean propaganda, news reports, defector accounts, policy papers, government reports, and academic works. The shortcoming of this approach is that there may be some ground-breaking research done in Korean, Japanese, and Chinese that has yet to be translated into English, and that could skew some of my findings and analyses. However, this can partially be overcome by examining sources such as the Cold War archival materials from the former Soviet Union, select Eastern bloc countries, and to a lesser extent China, since they continue to be compiled and translated by the NKIDP at the Woodrow Wilson Center in Washington, DC. Charles Armstrong has in fact noted that “while NKIDP has held numerous conferences and produced good number of working papers, thus far no major scholarly work has fully exploited this vast store of materials on North Korea’s pre-1990s history.”<sup>78</sup>

I also need to establish delimitations for the study by identifying the boundaries of my study – the task of narrowing the scope of the research.<sup>79</sup> Most importantly, this is not a history of North Korea or nuclear negotiations. While the study employs historical analysis and does address the nuclear crises, it is about determining what the survival tools are for the Kims and how they evolved as power was transferred from one Kim to another, and whether or not they consistently used smart power to survive. This study builds off the growing perception that many have noticed: North Korean diplomats are using “nuclear

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<sup>77</sup> Nigel King and Christine Horrocks, *Interviews in Qualitative Research* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications Inc., 2010) p. 21.

<sup>78</sup> Charles K. Armstrong, “Trends in the Study of North Korea,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* Vol. 70, No. 2 (May 2011), p. 368.

<sup>79</sup> Bloomberg and Volpe, *Completing Your Qualitative Dissertation*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., p. 114.

blackmail... with uncanny skill.”<sup>80</sup> Again, one of the more aspiring aims of this study is to examine whether the smart power theory can be transferable for examining future North Korean actions and other authoritarian regimes use of limited power resources to achieve their aims. In addition, it should be no surprise that others have examined most of these topics before, but initial reexamination of some issues suggests reviewing it from the origins of the North’s provocations is a worthwhile endeavor. We must also be willing to understand the North Korean perspective from the inside and, to accomplish that, we need to take more time to know and understand North Koreans’ interpretation of history and why it matters. The challenge is to identify the “observable implications” to provide the historical context.<sup>81</sup>

### 3.9 Summary

This chapter provided a detailed description of the thought process regarding the study’s research methodology. I have argued that the first task at hand is to examine the rule of the three Kims to answer the enabling research questions. The findings will lead to validating and perhaps identifying additional survival tools of the North Korean regime and how they have evolved from generation to generation. They are also likely to reveal several challenges to the Kims’ survival, such as dependence on Chinese support, weakening of the totalitarian system, and increased pressure from international sanctions. After this has been completed for each of the Kims, the difficult task of collecting the data for the multi-case study must be completed, and once the findings from the case studies have been determined, I can begin to interpret the overall findings to seek a higher level of understanding regarding the Kims’ survival strategy. However, there are some limitations that could weaken the study, such as researcher bias, but I believe I have acknowledged them and taken appropriate steps to mitigate most of them. For instance, these efforts include what is essentially the use of the crucial case selection method and diversification of sources. Moreover, by clearly identifying the scope of my research and

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<sup>80</sup> Andrei Lankov, *North of the DMZ: Essays on Daily Life in North Korea* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2007), p.2.

<sup>81</sup> King, Keohane, and Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry*, p. 29.

conducting an initial review of previous work on some of the cases, I have demonstrated the merits of this study. The final step would be to move beyond the interpretation of the findings and conclude the study with a new story about North Korea. That said, this story is not based on scientific theory, but as a hypothesis it has the potential to be transferable in examining other authoritarian states' use of power resources.

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## CHAPTER 4

### RISE OF KIM II-SUNG AND THE LEGACY OF THE *SURYONG*

*The most distinguishing feature about the Kim cult, then, is not its more extreme outward manifestations, extreme as they may be, but the intensity of the people's feelings. Even allowing for all the contrived displays of emotion and the feigned dedication of those who go along with the cult for reasons of self-interest, one cannot but be amazed at the overwhelming evidence of the people's strong emotional attachment to Kim.*<sup>1</sup>

- Helen-Louise Hunter

#### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter is about the rise of Kim Il-sung as a Korean leader in Manchuria, how he used his “uncanny ability” to outmaneuver more qualified opponents, both at home and abroad, consolidate his power in North Korea,<sup>2</sup> and set the conditions for reunification during the early years of his rule. Meanwhile, he managed to modify a totalitarian system he inherited from the Soviets using Korean characteristics, which softened the terroristic control aspect of the system with time-tested elements of Confucian statecraft mixed with an ideology based on Koreans’ long desire for self-reliance and independence from foreign interference (i.e., *Juche*). Kim managed to balance autarky and reliance on foreign aid to achieve early economic success after the Korean War; however, it was unsustainable, and the economy began to decline in the 1970s even as the North reached out to the West. By the late 1980s, it lost the war of legitimacy with the South and was on the verge of collapse by the early 1990s. Consequently, the regime shifted its aim from reunification at all cost to survival with nuclear weapons. In the end, Kim earned the admiration of his people and had the foresight to groom his son for over twenty years to introduce the only hereditary dynastic succession in the Communist world.

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<sup>1</sup> Helen-Louise Hunter, *Kim Il-sung's North Korea* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1999), p. 25.

<sup>2</sup> Sheila Miyoshi Jager, *Brother's At War: The Unending Conflict in Korea* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2013), p. 434.

An account of Kim's rise begins first with his prudent use of the Manchurian guerrilla legacy as one of several "symbolic forms" that Kim used to promulgate his legitimacy and myth as an unrivalled Korean leader during the Japanese colonial period that was easily comprehensible and became a meaningful frame<sup>3</sup> to position himself as the leader of *all* Koreans. What's more, when he saved a special group of alleged pro-Japanese Minsaengdan (MSD) suspects from the Chinese Communists, it signaled "the birth of Kim Il-sung's leadership."<sup>4</sup> After liberation from Japan, his guerrillas were reborn as "heroic anti-Japanese warriors" and their ascension to power facilitated the rise of his cult of personality.<sup>5</sup> Second, this chapter describes how various Korean factions from the ethnic Korean diaspora in Northeast Asia coalesced with the domestic faction at the beginning of the Soviet occupation in August 1945. With unwavering loyalty from his Manchurian guerrillas and timely support from the Soviets, Kim began to consolidate his power and, while some of the tactics he employed were similar to other authoritarian rulers, some observers noticed what was unique about him was "his greater skill as a strategist and tactician."<sup>6</sup>

Third, the chapter examines the six traits of North Korea's totalitarian system by using Friedrich and Brzezinski's definition of it from Chapter 1. The study reveals his tactics and strategies to complete his consolidation of power after the war and rebuilding of the country to achieve new heights in economic development.<sup>7</sup> It also describes how Kim gained the support of the Soviets and the Chinese as well as others in the Communist bloc to benefit from their largess to outpace South Korea economically after the Korean War. However, Kim's economy began to slow a bit in the 1960s when socialist aid began to decline<sup>8</sup> and that led him to search for Western capital and technology but it

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<sup>3</sup> Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), p. 30.

<sup>4</sup> Han, "Wounded Nationalism," p. 334.

<sup>5</sup> Han, "Wounded Nationalism," p. 358.

<sup>6</sup> Lee Chong-sik, "Politics in North Korea: Pre-Korean War Stage," *The China Quarterly*, No. 14 (April-June, 1963), p. 16.

<sup>7</sup> Robinson, *Korea's Twentieth-Century Odyssey*, p. 153.

<sup>8</sup> Armstrong, "'Fraternal Socialism'," pp. 163-181.

failed.<sup>9</sup> The North's economy never regained its momentum for growth as regime stability and desire for reunification trumped almost everything else. This demonstrated that Kim underestimated the growing South Korean economy well into the 1970s and misread South Korean desires for democracy as support for his Northern regime.<sup>10</sup> In other words, his commitment to achieve reunification clouded his judgement about the popular sentiment in the South and enticed him to pursue reunification until his death. Consequently, Seoul's hosting of the 1988 Olympic Games symbolized the end of Kim's dream of reunification<sup>11</sup> and the failure of the North's economy in the early 1990s brought into question his regime's survivability as his son's succession loomed.

Finally, what is surprising is that some knowledgeable observers of North Korea recognized there was "genuine belief held by the majority of the population in Kim's greatness, benevolence and goodness" based on Korea's neo-Confucian tradition. Kim enjoyed this popular support, in part, through monopoly control of information (and other totalitarian tools),<sup>12</sup> but one cannot ignore "he had charisma... His talent of establishing a real rapport with ordinary people was at the centre of the Kim cult, however much this may have been manipulated and orchestrated for political ends."<sup>13</sup> North Koreans proclaimed Kim as the Father of the Nation<sup>14</sup> and fashioned a cult of personality unlike any other in the world that continues to deify him as the Supreme Leader (*Suryong*)<sup>15</sup> and eternal President.<sup>16</sup> This is a stark contrast to the common perception in the Western media that North Korea and its leaders are "bizarre"

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<sup>9</sup> Charles K. Armstrong, "*Juche* and North Korea's Global Aspirations," North Korea International Documentation Project, Working Paper #1, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, April 2009, pp. 1-8.

<sup>10</sup> Bernd Schaefer, "Overconfidence Shattered: North Korean Unification Policy, 1971-1975," North Korea International Documentation Project, Working Paper #2, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, December 2010, pp. 3-24.

<sup>11</sup> Victor Cha, *Beyond the Final Score* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), p. 56.

<sup>12</sup> Jane Portal, *Art Under Control in North Korea* (London, UK: Reaktion Books Ltd, 2005), p.99.

<sup>13</sup> Portal, *Art Under Control in North Korea*, p.98.

<sup>14</sup> French, *North Korea: State of Paranoia*, p. 398.

<sup>15</sup> Samuel S. Kim, *The North Korean System in the post-Cold War Era* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), p. 13.

<sup>16</sup> Cumings, "The Kims' Three Bodies," p. 218.

and “irrational, demonic, and self-destructive.”<sup>17</sup> In short, Kim appears to have been a capable and charismatic leader from a relatively young age who was adept at using whatever means available to him to achieve his aims.

The questions is how did Kim become a god-like personage when there were so many others that could have ascended to power and how did he manage to survive for almost fifty years to ensure the first dynastic transition in the Communist world? It is true that Kim was not highly educated, but he “was an ‘engaging... charismatic... compelling’ man of native intellect and ability.”<sup>18</sup> The study of his rise in this chapter and the subsequent examination of select events during his rule in Chapter 5 reveal how Kim was fixated on achieving reunification and instinctively attempted to use smart power strategies to achieve his aims and survive. While Kim did have an uncanny and extraordinary ability to consolidate his power and achieve dynastic transition,<sup>19</sup> he failed to achieve what he desired most – reunification – despite his many smart power attempts to achieve it.

As noted in Chapter 1, Carr argues that one must examine the past to understand the present.<sup>20</sup> Han Hong-koo mimics Carr by arguing that history in the North Korean context “does not belong to the past, but governs the present.” He goes on to highlight that unless we understand the history of Kim Il-sung’s guerrilla movement in Manchuria, “we can explain nothing.”<sup>21</sup> Bruce Cumings cautioned that only when one takes the time to understand North Korea would it be possible to forecast its behavior and do something about it.<sup>22</sup> Han is even bolder by claiming, “north Korea’s real problem is that it is too predictable. The basic direction adopted during the anti-Japanese armed struggle period of the 1930s has not changed.”<sup>23</sup> With this in mind, it is time to explore Kim’s past in Manchuria.

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<sup>17</sup> Robinson, *Korea’s Twentieth-Century Odyssey*, p. 147.

<sup>18</sup> Hunter, *Kim Il-song’s North Korea*, pp. 25-26.

<sup>19</sup> Sheila Miyoshi Jager, *Brothers at War*, p. 434.

<sup>20</sup> Carr, *What is History?*, pp. 23-24.

<sup>21</sup> Han Hongkoo, “Wounded Nationalism,” p. 23.

<sup>22</sup> Cumings, “The Kims’ Three Bodies,” pp. 220-222.

<sup>23</sup> Han Hongkoo, “Wounded Nationalism,” p. 20.

## 4.2 Guerrilla Legacy as “Symbolic” Foundation for Myth and Legitimacy

Understanding Kim Il-sung’s guerrilla experience is essential to interpreting North Korean behavior. It is no secret that until the late 1990s the South Korean government banned the promulgation of the role of Kim Il-sung in the Korean Nationalist movement, and many historians in the West largely ignored the anti-Japanese Korean Communist movement in China.<sup>24</sup> According to Lim Un, a former colleague of Kim Il-sung who defected to the Soviet Union, many South Korean historians politicized the issue and refused to acknowledge Kim’s anti-Japanese activities in Manchuria, alleging he was only a leader of “mounted bandits.” Their aim was to accuse Kim of being a fake to promote anti-communism in South Korea. However, Lim confirmed he was the real Kim Il-sung, but denounced his tyrannical rule and the lies he told about his activities in Manchuria to create the myth he was planning for the liberation of Korea in China while he was under Soviet protection in the RFE.<sup>25</sup>

On the other hand, Kim Joung-won, a South Korean scholar, argued while there was no proof if the original Kim Il-sung ever existed, his legend was well known to many Koreans. He acknowledged that Kim adopted his pseudonym of Kim Il-sung while in Manchuria during the early 1930s as a leader of a band of anti-Japanese guerrillas. As a guerrilla leader, Kim learned some political skills as well as the import of the “instruments of force,” and demonstrated his leadership by keeping his band of volunteers together “against immense odds.”<sup>26</sup> The Japanese in fact believed Kim would be leading a force of liberation, but they surrendered before Kim could join the fight with the Soviets.<sup>27</sup> In the end, despite his anti-Japanese activities in Manchuria, Kim was not on the short list of potential leaders of Korea at the time of liberation. It

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<sup>24</sup> Tim Beal, *North Korea: The Struggle Against American Power* (London, UK: Pluto Press, 2005), p. 38.

<sup>25</sup> Lim Um, *The Founding of a Dynasty in North Korea: An Authentic Biography of Kim Il-sung* (Tokyo, Japan: Jiyu-sha, 1982), pp. 2-52.

<sup>26</sup> Kim Joungwon, *Divided Korea: The Politics of Development, 1945-1972* (Elizabeth, NJ: Hollym, 1997), pp. 39-40.

<sup>27</sup> Kim, *Divided Korea*, pp. 86-87.

was more likely that most Koreans failed to take him seriously, since most of them viewed the name as a “half-legendary Figure.”<sup>28</sup>

As a result, North Korea later fabricated the role Kim played in the liberation of Korea. Although he fought the Japanese in Manchuria, Pyongyang manufactured his other achievement by claiming he “fought the million-strong army of Japanese imperialism for fifteen long years and finally won freedom for the fatherland, overthrowing the Japanese imperialist brigands.”<sup>29</sup> Charles Armstrong makes it clear Kim never fought the Japanese during the Soviet liberation of Korea.<sup>30</sup> More importantly, according to Sydney Seiler, North Korean historians hid the fact that Kim and his guerrillas had escaped to the RFE in late 1940 and sat out the rest of the war as an officer in the Soviet Army’s 88<sup>th</sup> Special Independent Brigade. The unit performed intelligence collection operations against the Japanese in Manchuria but were forbidden by the Soviets from conducting combat operations against the Japanese because they had a non-aggression pact with Tokyo since April 1941. Hence, both Kim and the Soviets had to hide this inglorious past because they “stood to lose much from a revelation of the truth behind Kim’s Soviet Army connections.” It might have confirmed to some Kim was a Soviet puppet, and there is no doubt he had to escape to the RFE to save himself and his band of guerrillas<sup>31</sup> because the Japanese would have destroyed them.

As a result, North Korean historians had to manufacture Kim’s guerrilla activities on Paekdu Mountain, on the northern tip of Korea, during the period of Kim’s sojourn in the RFE. They claimed Kim Jong-il was born in a secret camp on the mountain on February 16, 1942, while his father “was making preparations for the final offensive against the Japanese.” (see Figure 4.1). This allegedly entailed deploying “small units, groups and political workers”

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<sup>28</sup> Kim, *Divided Korea*, pp. 39-40.

<sup>29</sup> Baik Bong, *Kim Il Sung: Biography*, Volume [II], (Beirut, Lebanon: Dar Al-Talia, 1973), p. 15.

<sup>30</sup> Armstrong, *The North Korean Revolution*, p. 55.

<sup>31</sup> Sydney A. Seiler, *Kim Il-song 1941-1948: The Creation of a Legend, The Building of a Regime* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1994), pp. 29-31.

throughout Korea to resist the Japanese and set the conditions for liberation.<sup>32</sup> This was all myth, but when WW II was about to end in August 1945, Kim and his guerrillas attempted to cross the China-North Korea border, but they were forced to return to the RFE. Although they somehow managed to get on board the Soviet ship Pugachev which arrived in Wonsan on September 19, 1945, the myth making led many of Kim's critics to ignore his role in the Korean independence movement.<sup>33</sup>



**Figure 4.1.** North Korean painting of Kim Il-sung, his first wife Kim Jong-suk, and their son Kim Jong-il at the cabin on Mt. Paekdu where North Korean historians claim Kim Jong-il was born at a secret guerrilla camp on February 16, 1942. Source, Book cover, Kwon and Chung, *North Korea: Beyond Charismatic Politics*.

Nevertheless, Armstrong cautions that recent evidence “clearly shows that Kim Il-sung did play an important role in the anti-Japanese armed resistance in Manchuria, becoming by the late 1930s one of the leading figures

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<sup>32</sup> *Kim Jong Il: Short Biography* (Pyongyang, Korea: Foreign Language Publishing House, 2001), p. 1.

<sup>33</sup> Armstrong, *The North Korean Revolution*, p. 55.

among both the Korean and Chinese guerrillas.”<sup>34</sup> One of his most successful operations was the June 1937 attack on a Japanese unit stationed at the small China-North Korea border town of Bochonbo (North Korea), with about 200 of his men.<sup>35</sup> According to Suh Dae-sook, Bochonbo “was the raid that made Kim famous and known to the Japanese.”<sup>36</sup> Han Hong-koo goes further and says “it bestowed national fame on Kim Il-sung, who had previously been known primarily as a local hero in Kando and Changbai.”<sup>37</sup> Similarly, Cumings argues that Kim was a well-recognized and impressive leader of anti-Japanese guerrillas in Manchuria by the mid-1930s. As a result, North Korean leaders continue to this day to “trace everything back to this distant beginning.”<sup>38</sup> Above every other trait of the North Korean regime (e.g., Communist, Nationalist, rogue, and axis of evil) stands the guerrillas’ legacy as anti-Japanese fighters.<sup>39</sup> Why is this relevant to North Korea’s survival? What compelled Kim to create his cult of personality?

Cheong Sung-hwa emphasizes that one of the few “common denominators of politics in postwar Korea” was both Koreas’ hatred of Japan (which arguably has not changed). In Seoul, President Syngman Rhee also used his long career as an anti-Japanese Nationalist to bolster his political power since he too was well aware that most Koreans hated Japan. However, the most powerful political party in South Korea was viewed as a “‘marginal’ ruling class” that was labeled as pro-Japanese.<sup>40</sup> In other words, from a Korean nationalist perspective, the North had more legitimacy than the regime in the South after liberation.

Kim was well aware of these political developments in South Korea. He accused the U.S. of consolidating pro-Japanese elements after liberation to

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<sup>34</sup> Armstrong, *The North Korean Revolution*, pp. 26-27.

<sup>35</sup> Adrian Buzo, *The Guerilla Dynasty: Politics and Leadership in North Korea* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1999), p. 8.

<sup>36</sup> Suh Dae Sook, *Kim Il Sung: The North Korean Leader* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), pp. 34-35.

<sup>37</sup> Han Hongkoo, “Wounded Nationalism,” p. 351.

<sup>38</sup> Cumings, *The Korean War*, p. 45.

<sup>39</sup> Cumings, *The Korean War*, pp. 44-45.

<sup>40</sup> Cheong, *The Politics of Anti-Japanese Sentiment in Korea*, pp. xi-xiv.



facilitate Japan's colonial rule. He called out Rhee as a "long-fostered running dog" for the U.S. and a reactionary ring leader. According to this view, North Koreans "became the masters of their destiny" while the South Koreans were "again condemned to slavish submission" to foreigners.<sup>41</sup> Therefore, it should be no surprise that Kim immortalized his own anti-Japanese guerrilla legacy to bolster his legitimacy and to agitate the South. Kwon Heon-ik and Chung Byung-ho's work on North Korean politics highlights its significance:

We know that the Manchurian legacy was central to Kim Il-sung's charismatic authority throughout his long political career. We have seen also how this legacy was forcefully revived in the 1970s to become a singularly important saga in the national history and how this process was intertwined with the unfolding of the drama of the political succession from Kim Il-sung to Kim Jong-il.<sup>42</sup>

This suggests the Manchurian legacy was not just about Kim Il-sung. It became a family legacy that his offspring could inherit from him as successor. In fact, Kim Jong-il honored his father's guerrilla comrades by supervising the renovation of their resting place, the Graves of Revolutionary Martyrs, in 1975 and 1985. (see Figure 4.2). It became another symbol of Kim Jong-il's filial piety toward his father and acknowledgment of the guerrilla revolutionaries for "whom the leader had deep affection."<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Kim Han Gil, *Modern History of Korea* (Pyongyang, Korea: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1979), pp. 173-176.

<sup>42</sup> Kwon and Chung, *North Korea: Beyond Charismatic Politics*, pp. 102-103.

<sup>43</sup> Kwon and Chung, *North Korea: Beyond Charismatic Politics*, pp. 113-114.



**Figure 4.2.** Revolutionary Martyr's Cemetery in Pyongyang, commemorating Kim Il-sung's guerrilla comrades, who continue to watch over the Korean people and the capital city. <https://travelleronamission.files.wordpress.com/2014/11/north-korea-pyongyang-big2.jpg>

Thus, the Kim family's right to lead all of Korea begins with this anti-Japanese legacy since Kim knew how most Koreans on both sides of the DMZ felt about the Japanese, and he exploited this popular belief to indoctrinate those in the North that they were the true Koreans while pro-Japanese Koreans and the U.S. imperialists were exploiting the masses in the South. This narrative probably resonated in the South as well since many viewed the Southern government as undemocratic at the time. As discussed in Chapter 2, John Tirman indicated the U.S. government was aware President Rhee was "a demagogue 'bent on autocratic rule'." Moreover, Rhee was reportedly chosen over other Korean leaders in the South because the hard right wing was largely perceived as Japanese collaborators.<sup>44</sup> This kind of sentiment probably convinced Kim that most South Koreans' preferred an anti-Japanese and

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<sup>44</sup> Tirman, *The Deaths of Others*, p. 93.

independent Nationalist government – his own regime in the North. Having said that, what do we know about Kim's leadership credentials?

#### **4.2.1 The Minsaengdan Incident and the Rise of Kim Il-sung**

What is less well-known about Kim Il-sung is that the CCP almost executed him as it began to purge Koreans en masse during the early 1930s. The CCP had cause to suspect the Koreans after a group of pro-Japanese Koreans in Kando (Chientao in Chinese) established the MSD – People's Livelihood Corps – in February 1932.<sup>45</sup> The MSD declared "its aim was to secure the livelihood of 400,000 Koreans in Kando and to build an earthly paradise for Koreans."<sup>46</sup> The MSD promoted Korean autonomy in Kando; some of its members even said Kando had historically been part of Korea and they had legitimate claims to the land.<sup>47</sup> This led to an anti-MSD campaign by the CCP from late 1932 to early 1935,<sup>48</sup> and resulted in the killing of up to 2,000 Korean Communists and supporters.<sup>49</sup> However, what is the significance of the MSD experience for Kim Il-sung?

According to Han Hong-koo, the CCP in Manchuria became so obsessed by the prospect of MSD agents, they imagined 70 to 80 percent of Koreans living in the Kando base areas were pro-Japanese agents.<sup>50</sup> By November 1933, several CCP cadres began to suspect Kim as a MSD member.<sup>51</sup> Kim Il-sung claimed he was accused of being a pro-Japanese agent because he helped the Chinese Nationalist army procure materials for 500 uniforms with the help of a local landlord. Kim argued that without his help these Chinese Nationalist soldiers would have deserted or surrendered to the Japanese. He decided to help them because the Communist guerrillas may not have been able to establish and hold the guerrilla zones by themselves. The CCP

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<sup>45</sup> Han, "Wounded Nationalism," p. 16.

<sup>46</sup> Han, "Wounded Nationalism," p. 34.

<sup>47</sup> Han, "Wounded Nationalism," pp. 47-48.

<sup>48</sup> Han, "Wounded Nationalism," p. 16.

<sup>49</sup> Han, "Wounded Nationalism," pp. 16-17.

<sup>50</sup> Han, "Wounded Nationalism," p. 76.

<sup>51</sup> Han, "Wounded Nationalism," pp. 179-180.

reportedly accused Kim of “Rightist capitulation” for providing winter clothing for the Chinese Nationalist army, not taking the anti-MSD campaign seriously, and allowing a sizeable number of MSD agents into the guerrilla army.<sup>52</sup> Han indicated that the CCP at this time were focused solely on the Chinese revolution, and any distraction to their revolutionary aims was not tolerated.<sup>53</sup>

Han argued that Kim was saved by Shi Zhongheng, a Chinese guerrilla commander whom Kim reportedly rescued during a combined guerrilla attack against the Japanese in the city of Dongning. Shi reportedly questioned how “a great Figure like Kim Il-sung could be a Japanese running dog and declared that if the CCP convicted him, then he would sever all his ties with the Communist guerrillas.”<sup>54</sup> Additionally, “A [Chinese] Communist document praised Kim Il-sung, commenting that the besieged guerrillas could escape safely because of his ‘composed, unwavering, adroit, and flexible leadership’” during the Dongning battle.<sup>55</sup> Since Shi was trusted by the CCP leadership in Manchuria, Kim was spared from the deadly purge.<sup>56</sup>

According to Han, for the North Korean leadership, the MSD purge is all about Korean nationalism and Kim’s role in overcoming the Chinese tendency to protect their own revolution at the expense of Korean independence. The Chinese Communists declared “that the right of self-determination for the minority peoples in China could only be enjoyed after ‘the final victory of the Chinese revolution and the complete expulsion of imperialist forces from China’.”<sup>57</sup> This policy line was a problem for the Koreans in the CCP since the CCP made it clear that it would not tolerate Koreans pursuing anti-Japanese activities “only for the sake of the Korean revolution.”<sup>58</sup> As a result, it is not surprising that Armstrong argued that the “fact Kim fought under Chinese

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<sup>52</sup> Kim Il Sung, *With the Century*, Volume 4 (Pyongyang, Korea: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1993), pp. 39-40.

<sup>53</sup> Han, “Wounded Nationalism,” pp. 76-77.

<sup>54</sup> Han, “Wounded Nationalism,” pp. 186-188.

<sup>55</sup> Han, “Wounded Nationalism,” pp. 178-179.

<sup>56</sup> Han, “Wounded Nationalism,” pp. 186-188.

<sup>57</sup> Han, “Wounded Nationalism,” pp. 93-98.

<sup>58</sup> Han, “Wounded Nationalism,” pp. 98-99.

command and was himself a member of the CCP disappeared from North Korean histories after the Korean War.”<sup>59</sup>

This seems to suggest Kim would have had a difficult time justifying himself as a ruler of North Korea if he had been a member of the CCP. Despite this assertion, Kim disclosed in his memoir that, during the winter of 1931, he established contact with the CCP for the first time and “became a cadre of an organization of the Chinese party,” continuing his “relations with the Chinese Communist Party throughout the whole period of the anti-Japanese armed struggle.”<sup>60</sup> He mentioned that the Comintern withdrew its recognition of the Korean Communist Party during the summer of 1928,<sup>61</sup> and it later informed the Koreans that they would have to do their party work by joining the CCP.<sup>62</sup> While Kim and other Korean Communists may have been frustrated with the Comintern’s ruling at the time,<sup>63</sup> the fact that well over 90% of CCP members in east Manchuria were Koreans may have comforted them since they were essentially playing a leading role in the local party anyway.<sup>64</sup> As a result, Kim appears to have adopted the long view and focused on laying the groundwork for establishing the Korean Communist Party as members of the CCP.<sup>65</sup>

Han argues that the two most important lessons from the MSD purge is how it shaped the *Juche* ideology and idealized the unique relationship between the North Korean leader and his people.<sup>66</sup> Han also emphasized that “the greatest significance in studying the MSD Incident lies in its long-lasting influence on North Korea and its ‘Great Leader’ Kim Il-sung.”<sup>67</sup> Han stressed the MSD Incident is critical to Kim because it led him to the band of loyal guerrillas and orphans who would eventually follow him to Korea after

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<sup>59</sup> Armstrong, *The North Korean Revolution*, p. 28.

<sup>60</sup> Kim Il Sung, *With the Century*, Volume 2 (Pyongyang, Korea: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1992), pp. 68-69.

<sup>61</sup> Kim, *With the Century*, Vol. 2, pp. 56-57.

<sup>62</sup> Kim, *With the Century*, Vol. 2, pp. 56-57.

<sup>63</sup> Kim, *With the Century*, Vol. 2, p. 58.

<sup>64</sup> Han, “Wounded Nationalism,” p. 10.

<sup>65</sup> Kim, *With the Century*, Vol. 2, pp. 67-69.

<sup>66</sup> Han, “Wounded Nationalism,” p. 354.

<sup>67</sup> Han, “Wounded Nationalism,” p. 19.

liberation.<sup>68</sup> In fact, it is likely that only about 30 to 40 of his guerrillas had experienced the MSD purges out of approximately a hundred guerrillas who returned to Korea with him after Japan's surrender. The other 60 to 70 guerrillas were from elsewhere in Manchuria or had joined the unit after the MSD purges. Han argues these MSD guerrillas formed the core leadership of Kim's regime which "was strong enough to shape the basic configuration of north Korean political culture."<sup>69</sup>



**Figure 4.3.** North Korean painting of Kim Il-sung with alleged MSD agents at Mount Maan and Kim directing the burning of the CCP files that tainted them as pro-Japanese agents. Note: The website was no longer available after the initial download of the painting.

The point is that, if one ignores or is unaware of the significance of the MSD incident in Kim's leadership development, then it is likely to have an impact on the overall judgment about Kim, his leadership ability, and his subsequent actions in North Korea. The story of Kim and his MSD guerrillas begins when Kim became the Third Division Commander of the Second Army,

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<sup>68</sup> Han, "Wounded Nationalism," pp. 331-337 and 341-346.

<sup>69</sup> Han, "Wounded Nationalism," pp. 331-337 and 353-354.

NEAJUA, in early March 1936.<sup>70</sup> When Kim marched to Mount Maan with a small band of guerrillas to link up with a part of his command, he discovered the unit had not arrived. The only option he had to form the unit was a band of about 100 MSD suspects.<sup>71</sup> One of Kim's biographies highlighted his "motherly affection" for these MSD suspects and claimed he viewed them as "the most valuable thing in the world." When errors were committed against them, Kim worked tirelessly to "rectify their errors with deep concern." Ultimately, Kim "infinitely loved and trusted them and trained all of them into indomitable Communists through education and actual struggles."<sup>72</sup>

According to Han, Kim reviewed the records of the MSD suspects and decided to give them all a second chance. He reportedly ordered some of them to burn all the files that had tainted them at some risk to his own well-being and, needless to say, all of them broke down in tears. (see Figure 4.3). Han writes, "The flames and the wailing symbolized the starting point of the unique relationship between Kim Il-sung and his followers that lasted almost six decades."<sup>73</sup> These MSD suspects formed two regiments<sup>74</sup> of his Third Division and participated in the Bocheonbo raid that would bring Kim fame.<sup>75</sup> In addition to the MSD guerrillas,<sup>76</sup> there were about 20 orphans<sup>77</sup> from the guerrilla base camps who viewed Kim "as an absolute being,"<sup>78</sup> and they would also form the core leadership of North Korea. Most importantly, Han argues the MSD incident forced Kim to contemplate the issue of an independent Korean revolution, thus

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<sup>70</sup> Han, "Wounded Nationalism," pp. 322-323.

<sup>71</sup> Han, "Wounded Nationalism," pp. 329-330.

<sup>72</sup> Baik Bong, *Kim Il Sung: Biography*, Volume [I] (Beirut, Lebanon: Dar Al-Talia, 1973), pp. 346-347.

<sup>73</sup> Han, "Wounded Nationalism," pp. 334.

<sup>74</sup> The use of the term regiment is misleading since the size of these guerrilla units were more like company sized elements. For example, Suh Dae-Sook reported that Kim Il Sung commanded his own division of 100 men. See Suh, *Kim Il Sung: The North Korean Leader*, p. 22. Suh, *Kim Il Sung*, p. 34-35.

<sup>75</sup> Han, "Wounded Nationalism," pp. 329-334.

<sup>76</sup> Han, "Wounded Nationalism," pp. 353-354.

<sup>77</sup> Han, "Wounded Nationalism," p. 360.

<sup>78</sup> Han, "Wounded Nationalism," p. 359.

planting the seed of *Juche* and shaping the formation of Kim's relationship with the masses in North Korea.<sup>79</sup>

#### 4.2.2 Kim Il-sung and the Arduous March

Another important element of Kim's guerrilla legacy is the arduous march that was later evoked by the regime as the symbol of self-sacrifice during periods of crises, to include the famine years of the 1990s. In 2007, Pyongyang claimed that the march was an epochal event for North Koreans, and clarified that it specifically refers "to the trek made by the main force of the Korean People's Revolutionary Army from Nanpaizi, Mengjiang County, to Beiddingzi, Changbai Country" from early December 1938 to late March 1939.<sup>80</sup> According to Suh Dae-sook, Kim had been active near the China-Korea border with about 150 of his guerrillas and a similar sized Chinese force under the command of Cao Guoan. Their battles against the Japanese included engagements near Mount Paektu in February 26, 1937. This combined force of 250 guerrillas fought and killed 13 Japanese officers and wounded 14 Japanese soldiers in "the snow-covered highland where they [Kim's guerrillas] were hiding." (see Figure 4.4). Suh also mentions another raid into Korea in May 1939.<sup>81</sup> Although the timeline is slightly off, the arduous march appears to coincide with the May 1939 raid. Kim claimed this was the "bitterest time of trial in the entire history of the anti-Japanese armed struggle." The Japanese were intensifying their "punitive" counterinsurgency operations in Manchuria and used their propaganda to claim Kim's guerrillas were destroyed.<sup>82</sup>

Kim claimed that the only way to boost the declining morale of the Koreans in Manchuria and Korea proper was to risk his own survival by leading guerrilla operations into Korea to demonstrate his troops were still alive to expose the lies of Japanese and to give hope to the Korean people.<sup>83</sup> Kim

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<sup>79</sup> Han, "Wounded Nationalism," p. 354.

<sup>80</sup> Kim Il Sung, *With the Century*, Volume 7 (Pyongyang, Korea: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 2007), pp. 124-149.

<sup>81</sup> Suh, *Kim Il Sung*, p. 37.

<sup>82</sup> Kim, *With the Century*, Vol. 7, pp. 124-128.

<sup>83</sup> Kim, *With the Century*, Vol. 7, pp. 124-126.



argued this 110-day march was so difficult that it could not be compared with any other revolutionary march in history.<sup>84</sup> Kim claimed that at the early stage of the march his troops had two meals per day of gruel, and then they had to live on one meal a day until the food ran out. The lack of food meant that there were “many short men among the anti-Japanese veterans” because they had a poor diet when they were young and they experienced difficult lives as revolutionaries.<sup>85</sup>



Kim viewed the arduous march as the epitome of his guerrilla legacy because it demonstrated his guerrillas were “true sons of the fatherland and the people, and the revolutionary fighters were unfailingly loyal to their nation and to the cause of national liberation.” Kim truly believed that his people for generations had to “learn and follow” the example of his guerrillas because they “rallied rock-solid behind their leader and did not relinquish their faith in any

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<sup>84</sup> Kim, *With the Century*, Vol. 7, p. 127.

<sup>85</sup> Kim, *With the Century*, Vol. 7, p. 129.

adversity.” He touted all of them as immortal beings because their revolutionary spirit and the spirit of self-reliance convinced them of their ultimate victory. They also loved their revolutionary comrades no matter what the challenge they faced, and this helped them to overcome starvation and the cold winter “like immortal beings.” Kim wrote that, because of the difficult international environment today, North Koreans were following the tradition of the arduous march. The imperialists were now stronger than the Japanese he had faced in Manchuria and they were facing conditions “little short of war.” *The only way to survive was to adopt the same spirit of the anti-Japanese guerrillas during the arduous march.* In fact, this spirit helped overcome the challenges faced during rebuilding of the country after liberation, the Great Fatherland Liberation War (the Korean War), and post-Korean War construction. As long as the people believed in the spirit of the arduous march, “self-reliance, fortitude and optimism,” North Korea would survive.<sup>86</sup>

In sum, in spite of North Korea’s manufacturing of his activities on Mount Paekdu, Kim’s guerrilla experience had a lasting impact on the North Korean regime. His leadership demonstrated as a young guerrilla leader under very difficult conditions taught him the importance of Korean self-reliance, and provided the confidence and the practical experience that he would later use to contest for North Korean leadership after liberation from Japan. More importantly, the guerrilla legacy would later define the ideal North Korean revolutionary spirit and the arduous march would justify the regime’s endless calls for its people to sacrifice during difficult times. The retelling of the arduous march implied that if the people remained steadfastly loyal no matter what the revolutionary task, they too could achieve immortality by following the lead of Kim and his guerrillas. As he continued to consolidate his power after the Korean War, Kim noted his guerrillas were wasting away in obscurity after they returned to North Korea and criticized the functionaries for not holding their

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<sup>86</sup> Kim Il Sung, *With the Century*, Vol. 7, pp. 136-149.

guerrilla “revolutionary seniors in high esteem.”<sup>87</sup> It signaled the rise of his guerrillas and the consolidation of his totalitarian rule.

### **4.3 Totalitarianism as a Survival Tool: Kim Il-Sung’s Totalitarian Rule**

I begin by revisiting the six traits of totalitarianism to examine how Kim Il-sung established his own totalitarian dictatorship (i.e., dominant ideology, single mass party, terroristic police control, monopoly of information, control of the military, and central command of the economy).<sup>88</sup> As noted, the first of six traits of totalitarian dictatorships starts with official ideology that must be adhered to by all members of society, and *Juche* has remained the official ideology of North Korea arguably since 1955 (defined in Chapter 1). As discussed in Chapter 2, Charles Armstrong has argued *Juche* and the Kim regime’s own style of socialism, plus its going it alone approach, appears to be a unifying force for the North Korean people and partially explains the Kim regime’s resiliency.<sup>89</sup>

#### **4.3.1 Kim Il-sung’s Workers’ Party and Sorting of the Core Elite**

Second, there must be a single mass party with a hard core elite that is completely dedicated to the ideology and loyal to the dictatorial leader. When Kim returned to Korea in September 1945, some argued he had to contest for power with four main ethnic Korean groups alongside Soviet occupation forces. They consisted of domestic Communists, those returning from China (i.e., Yen-an faction), others returning from the Soviet Union with the Soviets (to include Kim Il-sung’s faction), and non-Communist Korean Nationalists from within Korea.<sup>90</sup> On the other hand, the U.S. IC in July 1956 pointed out there were three groups of Communists vying for power in the North, consisting of domestic Communists, the Yen-an faction, and the Soviet faction. However, the

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<sup>87</sup> Kim Il Sung, *Selected Works*, Volume I (Pyongyang, Korea: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1976), p. 587.

<sup>88</sup> Friedrich and Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, pp. 9-10.

<sup>89</sup> Armstrong, “Ideological Introversion and Regime Survival,” p. 99.

<sup>90</sup> Lee, “Politics in North Korea,” p. 4.

U.S. IC differentiated the composition of the Soviet faction by separating Kim's Manchurian guerrillas from the Koreans from Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.<sup>91</sup>

Still others such as Glenn Paige and Lee Dong-jun argued there were five KWP factions. While they also mentioned the Yen'an and Soviet factions, their interpretation of the Soviet group did not include Kim Il-sung's guerrillas. Their perspective on the Soviet faction included only those Soviet Koreans who returned with the Soviet Army in 1945 but had not been active in the anti-Japanese movement prior to 1945. They also separated the domestic Communists into two groups, one each from the South and the North. They referred to Kim's group as the Kapsan group since his guerrillas were associated with Korean Communists operating in the town of Kapsan in Northern Korea during the Japanese occupation.<sup>92</sup>

Lim Jae-cheon, however, suggests that the Kapsan faction should not be considered as Kim Il-sung's faction. While it is true that this group formed an underground network in Kapsan to fight the Japanese and made contacts with Kim's guerrillas starting in 1936,<sup>93</sup> they should be considered as a separate domestic Communist group. Hence, I argue it is more appropriate to call Kim's group the Manchurian guerrillas (e.g., guerrilla faction or partisan group), even if they had associated with the Kapsan faction since the mid-1930s. What this suggests is that there were six distinct groups vying for power in North Korea after liberation and they would all have a part in the establishment of the KWP and the North Korean revolution. They are Kim's Manchurian guerrillas, the Soviet-Korean faction, the Yen'an faction, the Korean Communists from the South and the North, and the non-Communist Korean Nationalists. The Kapsan faction belongs in the domestic Communist group. This is important because it recognizes Kim's guerrillas as a separate group with Nationalist credentials who were fully capable of "adapting Communist theory to local conditions." As

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<sup>91</sup> National Intelligence Estimate Number 42.2-56, "Probable Developments in North Korea Over the Next Few Years," Submitted by the Director of Central Intelligence, July 3, 1956, pp. 1-4.

<sup>92</sup> Robert A. Scalapino, ed., *North Korea Today* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1963), pp. 19-20.

<sup>93</sup> Lim, *Kim Jong Il's Leadership of North Korea*, p. 37.

Henry Kissinger noted, Kim spent his life “fighting for national causes.”<sup>94</sup>

Having clarified there were five other groups contending for power with Kim, I will examine how he established his single mass party.

According to Lankov, in order to appreciate the attitude of the Soviet Civil Administration (SCA) in North Korea, one must understand how the Soviets attempted to apply the official line of Marxism-Leninism in North Korea and Eastern Europe. The Sovietization of their satellites began with the initial phases of “‘people’s democracy’ and ‘people’s democratic revolution,’” and it would eventually evolve into a ‘socialist’ revolution.” In practice, the united front of various factions would be formed to realize the people’s democracy and revolution, and that would be exhibited by land reform, nationalization of industry, announcement of gender equality, and democratic freedoms.<sup>95</sup> Simply put, Hugh Seton-Watson described this Sovietization process in 1951 as a honeymoon period of genuine coalition, between Communists and other parties, followed by a bogus coalition when the dominant pro-Soviet Communist party effectively controls or isolates all other parties. Eventually, the Communist party becomes the monolithic regime. This aptly described what initially occurred in North Korea under Soviet tutelage.<sup>96</sup> The question is how much credit does Kim deserve for establishing his mass party?

As Lankov and Seton-Watson explained, there would be a period of genuine coalition in North Korea because it lacked a strong Communist party due to factionalism and Japanese suppression of their activities, and the Korean Communist movement would cease to exist by 1928.<sup>97</sup> The Soviets had no choice but to consider Cho Man-sik, the leader of the non-Communist Nationalists in the North. They relied on Cho’s pure Nationalist credentials to establish a “native governing body” on the northern half of the Peninsula.<sup>98</sup> Cho was a respected Christian teacher who was a leader of the Christian movement

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<sup>94</sup> Henry Kissinger, *On China* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2011), pp. 122-123.

<sup>95</sup> Andrei Lankov, *From Stalin to Kim Il Sung: The Formation of North Korea 1945-1960* (New Brunswick: NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2002), pp. 8-9.

<sup>96</sup> Lankov, *From Stalin to Kim Il Sung*, pp. 8-9.

<sup>97</sup> Lankov, *From Stalin to Kim Il Sung*, p. 10.

<sup>98</sup> Lee, “Politics in North Korea,” p. 4.

in Korea, which happened to be the only Korean movement of significance that was tolerated by the Japanese. Lee Chong-sik argued that Cho's Korean Democratic Party (KDP) had the potential to be an influential political party in North Korea but he refused to accept the five-year trusteeship<sup>99</sup> that the U.S., Soviet, and British foreign ministers called for at the December 16, 1945, Moscow Conference.<sup>100</sup>

According to Erik Van Ree, the U.S. State Department publicly announced in October 1945 that Koreans were not prepared to govern themselves and would require a period of trusteeship. As expected, most Koreans perceived the plan as “a great insult to Korea’.”<sup>101</sup> The Soviets eventually agreed to the trusteeship, which Korean communists had to follow, because they realized it could not occur without the establishment of a single unified Korean government, which they knew was unlikely without their consent.<sup>102</sup> When the U.S. commander in the South persuaded Song Chin-u, a democratic leader, to accept the trusteeship, he was killed the next day.<sup>103</sup> The leftist forces had enjoyed broad support in the South after liberation because many perceived leftism as “almost synonymous with the opposition to Japan and it made the Korean masses highly sympathetic to the left.” While Koreans admired the leftists, the conservative forces on the right were perceived to be Japanese collaborators. Yet, the forces on the right finally gained the political initiative by opposing the trusteeship, which was perceived by them as another form of colonialism. This was significant because popular support for the left dropped significantly after the trusteeship debate as the left was forced to support it by Moscow.<sup>104</sup>

When Romanenko, the head of the SCA, failed to persuade Cho Man-sik to accept the trusteeship on January 1, 1946, he was arrested. Cho as a

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<sup>99</sup> Lee, “Politics in North Korea,” pp. 4-5.

<sup>100</sup> Erik van Ree, *Socialism In One Zone: Stalin's Policy in Korea 1945-1947* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989), p. 135.

<sup>101</sup> Ree, *Socialism In One Zone*, pp. 129-130.

<sup>102</sup> Ree, *Socialism In One Zone*, pp. 135-147.

<sup>103</sup> Ree, *Socialism In One Zone*, p. 142.

<sup>104</sup> Kim Hun-joon, *The Massacres at Mt. Halla: Sixty Years of Truth Seeking in South Korea* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014), pp. 22-23.

Nationalist could not accept the Moscow Agreement, but some believed that if he would have gone along with the Soviets, they would have kept him on for a while as their preferred leader of North Korea.<sup>105</sup> After Cho's purge, his KDP still managed to win 351 seats during the nationwide people's committee elections in November 1946. The Friends Party of the Chondogyo group also won 253 seats, while the KWP won 1,102 seats. Another 1,753 elected members claimed they had no party affiliation at all. It was clear the political situation was in flux and the KWP had more work to do before it became the dominant party in North Korea. According to Cumings, Kim appointed Choe Yong-gon, one of his guerrilla comrades, as head of the KDP in December 1946. Choe attacked the members of the KDP for being "petty-bourgeois" and harboring factionalism since most were former landlords and Christians.<sup>106</sup>

Kim removed the opposition from the KDP by imprisoning its Christian leaders, and the police were willing to use force as they did when over twenty Christian protesters were killed in Sinuiju. After the Sinuiju Incident, Kim tolerated the Christian churches until the Korean War but by then Christians were no longer a political force in North Korea. Cumings argued Kim used similar tactics to eliminate "all nonleftist political opposition with a draconian thoroughness." Nevertheless, Cumings was reluctant to label the North Korean regime as a totalitarian one. He argued that the state of affairs in North Korea was "less a totalitarian atmosphere" and noted that the regime was more concerned about enforcing its new regimented socialist lifestyle than achieving total domination over society. That said, Cumings argues Kim was able to eliminate his opposition because he was simply better organized and the opposition was much weaker than his faction. Hence, Kim could afford to be more selective during the purges because he was dealing with "numerically small classes and groups." Cumings also speculated that Kim may have refrained from indiscriminate purges because he learned from the CCP that it

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<sup>105</sup> Ree, *Socialism In One Zone*, pp. 139-143.

<sup>106</sup> Bruce Cumings, *Korea's Place in the Sun: A Modern History* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1997), p. 230.

was more preferable to “reeducate and reform political recalcitrants.”<sup>107</sup> Lee Chong-sik also argued that Kim could have used brute force to eliminate his opponents but he knew that was undesirable.<sup>108</sup>

While Kim may have shown restraint at times, he did not hesitate to eliminate his enemies. He tried to purge General Mu Chong from the Yen-an faction during the Korean War but Mu escaped because the Chinese intervened to save his life in 1950.<sup>109</sup> Kim unfairly blamed Mu for the KPA’s heavy losses and his purges continued as Ho Kai, the leader of the Soviet faction, was also denounced for his “extreme leftist error” in refusing party membership to hard-working peasants.<sup>110</sup> Ho allegedly committed suicide in 1951 and Pak Chang-ok replaced him as the leader of the Soviet faction.<sup>111</sup> Soon after the war ended, Kim attacked Pak Hon-yong, the leader of the South Korean Communists. The regime held a military tribunal in early August 1953 and charged Pak and his followers for planning a coup and for being U.S. spies. Yi Sung-yup, one of Pak’s followers, was accused of planning a coup with 4,000 South Koreans being trained in the north for guerrilla operations in the South. Of the twelve accused, ten were sentenced to death, but Pak was spared execution until December 1955.<sup>112</sup> However, Kim was not done with his purges.

Kim Il-sung had to complete the consolidation of his power by eliminating the remnants of the Yen-an faction and that meant purging Kim Tu-bong and Choe Chang-ik after the Third Party Congress in April 1956. Kim accused them of dogmatically following “the experience of other countries,” and some of the Yen-an faction led by Yun Kong-hum attacked Kim Il-sung for his growing personality cult and his directive style of leadership. Kim Tu-bong demanded that the KWP give up its control of the Supreme People’s Assembly (SPA), and another member of the Yen-an faction sought independence of trade unions

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<sup>107</sup> Cumings, *Korea’s Place In The Sun*, pp. 230-232.

<sup>108</sup> Lee, “Politics in North Korea,” p. 13.

<sup>109</sup> Paige and Lee, “The Post-War Politics of Communist Korea,” pp. 20-23.

<sup>110</sup> Nam Koon Woo, *The North Korean Communist Leadership, 1945-1965* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1974), pp. 88-90. On the other hand, Nam claims Kim imprisoned Mu Chong and he was “never to be seen or heard from again.” (p. 88).

<sup>111</sup> Paige and Lee, “The Post-War Politics of Communist Korea,” pp. 20-23.

<sup>112</sup> Paige and Lee, “The Post-War Politics of Communist Korea,” p. 21.



from the KWP. Finally, the Yen'an group demanded that "the distorted history of the Korean Communist movement" which portrays Kim's guerrilla faction as the "only true Communists" be corrected. Similarly, the Soviet faction also complained about Kim's dictatorial style, but they were unpopular because they enjoyed special privileges as Soviet citizens.<sup>113</sup>

Ken Gause argued both the Yen'an and Soviet factions were emboldened to challenge Kim after the 20th Soviet Party Congress attacked Stalin in 1956. Both groups subsequently pushed for collective leadership in the North<sup>114</sup> and were ready to challenge Kim's dominance of the party. This attempt occurred in April 1956 when Kim was on his trip to the Soviet Union, Mongolia, and Eastern Europe. Key leaders of both factions participated, and the Soviet faction may have gained the support of the Soviet Ambassador in Pyongyang, while a Yen'an Korean who was the North Korean Ambassador to Moscow attempted to gain the support of Soviet leaders in the Kremlin. They sensed after the Third Party Congress in April 1956, that Kim's guerrillas were preparing to take over the party leadership. When Kim returned from his trip in July 1956, the party paper stated Kim was against the personality cult but acknowledged "the enormous contributions made by Stalin." The direct challenge to Kim came during the August 1956 plenum of the Central Committee of the party. Both groups criticized Kim for his anti-people policies but they were suppressed by his men. The revolt known as the "August Factionalist Incident" was initially viewed as a crisis, but it ended up strengthening Kim's power.<sup>115</sup>

Apparently, the Soviets and the Chinese both sensed a bloody purge was coming, and decided to send high-level emissaries Peng Duhuai and Anastas Mikoyan to urge Kim to exercise moderation in dealing with the rebels. Kim decided to let all of them out of prison and reinstated their party membership, but not their official posts. When Peng and Mikoyan departed in

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<sup>113</sup> Paige and Lee, "The Post-War Politics of Communist Korea," pp. 22-23.

<sup>114</sup> Ken Gause, "Coercion, Control, Surveillance, and Punishment," *The Committee for Human Rights in North Korea*, 2012, pp. 97-98. Although Gause's work does not specify when the 20<sup>th</sup> Soviet Party Congress occurred in 1956, it was held in Moscow from February 24 to 25, 1956.

<sup>115</sup> Nam, *The North Korean Communist Leadership*, pp. 110-115.

September 1956, the Yen-an faction and its allies were vanquished. The effort to root out supporters of the August Factionalists began in February 1957 and lasted until the end of the year. The Central Committee would oversee the purges in each of the nine North Korean provinces to get rid of the anti-Kim elements. The intent was to separate the masses from the leadership of the two groups, and a similar process occurred throughout North Korea when the Communists from the South were purged in August 1953.<sup>116</sup> Many of the Soviet faction left the country prior to 1956 and their exodus continued until they were no longer a major factor in the KWP. Some of the Yen-an faction also managed to escape to China and the group was effectively eliminated by 1958.<sup>117</sup> Lee Chong-sik's study of the KWP argued that by 1958, the KWP became Kim's party and the transmission belt for all his directives.<sup>118</sup>

What is interesting is that despite the impression that these purges purged all of his enemies, Kim allowed some from the domestic and Soviet groups to serve in senior positions. However, those from China were all purged by 1970. The Chinese may have all been purged due to increased tensions between Pyongyang and Beijing during the Chinese Cultural Revolution. Perhaps most importantly, as Kim Jong-il was gaining prominence in the 1970s, a new group began to dominate the KWP leadership. (see Table 4.1). In sum, despite the Kim faction's unity, his success in eliminating the opposition and setting the conditions for further consolidation of power was not possible without direct Soviet military support from liberation to the end of 1948. As a result, some argue Kim was a "faithful disciple of Stalin," and he was a ruthless leader in employing Stalin's "Machiavellian methods of removing his colleagues." Nevertheless, his creation of a unified single party under his control suggests one must not ignore Kim's "greater skill as a strategist and tactician,"<sup>119</sup> especially considering his age at the time.

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<sup>116</sup> Nam, *The North Korean Communist Leadership*, pp. 110-115.

<sup>117</sup> Paige and Lee "The Post-War Politics of Communist Korea," pp. 20-23.

<sup>118</sup> Lee Chong-sik, *Korean Workers' Party: A Short History* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1978), p. 133.

<sup>119</sup> Lee, "Politics in North Korea," p. 16.

<b>Table 4.1. Changes in the Membership of the KWP Central Committee</b>							
Party Congresses	Total	Domestic Group	Soviet Group	Yenan Group	Partisans (Guerrillas)	Unknown Group	New Group
1) 1st KWP CCM (1946)	43	13	6	12	4	8	0
2) Re-elected to 2nd CCM	30	11	6	8	3	2	0
3) Dropped	12	2	0	4	0	6	0
4) Died	1	0	0	0	1	0	0
1) 2nd KWP CCM (1948)	67	21	14	13	7	12	0
2) From 1st KWP CCM	30	11	6	8	3	2	0
3) New Members	37	10	8	5	4	10	0
4) Re-elected	29	8	7	7	5	2	0
5) Dropped	35	13	6	6	0	10	0
6) Died	3	0	1	0	2	0	0
1) 3rd KWP CCM (1956)	71	23	11	14	11	12	0
2) From 2nd KWP CCM	29	8	7	7	5	2	0
3) New Members	42	15	4	7	5	10	0
4) Re-elected	28	11	2	2	10	3	0
5) Dropped	42	12	9	12	0	9	0
6) Died	1	0	0	0	1	0	0
1) 4th KWP CCM (1961)	85	19	3	2	35	5	21
2) From 3rd KWP CCM	28	11	2	2	10	3	0
3) New Members	57	8	1	0	25	2	21
4) Re-elected	31	7	1	0	19	2	2
5) Dropped	52	11	2	2	15	3	19
6) Died	2	1	0	0	1	0	0
1) 5th KWP CCM (1970)	117	9	2	0	32	6	68
2) From 4th KWP CCM	31	7	1	0	19	2	2
3) New Members	86	2	1	0	13	4	66
Note: KWP = Korean Workers' Party; CCM = Central Committee Member; Designated Number CCM = Numbered Congress, Source: Suh Dae-Sook and Lee Chae-Jin, eds., <i>Political Leadership in Korea</i> (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1976), p. 164.							

#### 4.3.2 Kim's Manipulation of Secret Police and Neo-Confucianism

Third, within the totalitarian system terror becomes the vital nerve of the political system, and demands complete loyalty from the masses and those

viewed as disloyal are exterminated or sent to the gulags.<sup>120</sup> It should be no surprise based on his early purges that there was (and still is) an internal security apparatus that supported Kim's rise to power and kept him there until his death. The question is whether Kim relied solely on terroristic control or not. When the first governing body in North Korea was formed under the Five Province Administrative Bureau headed by Cho Man-sik, before he lost favor with the Soviets, it formed the "protection and security units (Bo-an-dae)" on November 19, 1945, to maintain social order. According to Gause, many North Korean intelligence and security services today claim their origin to this day. After Cho was purged, Kim assumed control of the "Provisional People's Committee" in February 1946, and his Protection and Security Bureau was led by Cho Yong-gun, one of his Manchurian guerrillas. Cho also controlled "shadowy" intelligence organizations that were precursors to today's State Security Department (SSD), which kept a close eye on "pro-Japanese and reactionary forces."<sup>121</sup>

In February 1947, the North Korean People's Committee was established to form a more permanent government and the Bo-an-dae became the Bureau of Internal Affairs. The security apparatus continued to evolve when North Korea was established on September 9, 1948. The Bureau became the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) and its headquarters consisted of four to five thousand personnel. It had operational control over 12,000 police, 3,000 secret police, and 45,000 more personnel belonging to Security and Border Guard units as well as the Railroad Guard units. The police elements provided traditional police services to maintain social order, the Security Guards units protected key facilities, and the Border Guards secured its national boundaries. However, the police also had their own informant networks to conduct normal police functions but also to monitor "individuals potentially harmful to the state."

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<sup>120</sup> Friedrich and Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, pp. 130-137 and p. 161.

<sup>121</sup> Gause, "Coercion, Control, Surveillance, and Punishment," pp. 85-86.

Prior to the Korean War, North Korea probably had about 400,000 informants in the police-monitoring network, roughly five percent of the population.<sup>122</sup>

The Political Security Bureau (PSB), which functioned as the secret police, under the command of Pang Hak-se, was responsible for enforcing the people's loyalty to the Kim regime. Pang was a former Soviet security agent in Uzbekistan before his arrival in North Korea in 1945 and became known as the founding father of the North Korean secret police. He was one of the few members of the Soviet faction that survived the purges of the 1950s and remained loyal to Kim until his death in 1992. The PSB's mission was "exposing and destroying all manner of plots and subversive activities" that threatened Kim's new government. This meant they were sometimes competing with the regular police but their responsibility extended beyond North Korea's borders. They performed foreign intelligence collection, counterintelligence activities, surveillance, and investigations of domestic organizations to include the KWP, Ministry of Defense, and state enterprises.<sup>123</sup>

According to Gause, the secret police had a more extensive informant network than the regular police, although some informants may have served both of them in some places. Surprisingly, one of the important tasks of the secret police was to gauge public opinion for the leadership. These reports reportedly had the potential to shape policy and gave the PSB an indirect role in policy formulation.<sup>124</sup> Cumings also noted that the regime collected information regarding individuals' political statements, even if they were only rumors, to assess their loyalty and to maintain the regime's pulse on popular opinion. For example, the regime attempted to gauge public opinion in the South during the Korean War because "the most important mechanism for impressing the masses with the correctness and superiority of people's sovereignty is the question of grasping what their opinions are, and how they can be changed... to sweep away antidemocratic phenomena and incorrect thought among the

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<sup>122</sup> Gause, "Coercion, Control, Surveillance, and Punishment," pp. 87-92.

<sup>123</sup> Gause, "Coercion, Control, Surveillance, and Punishment," pp. 92-95.

<sup>124</sup> Gause, "Coercion, Control, Surveillance, and Punishment," p. 93.

village people.”<sup>125</sup> This implies the regime did not rely solely on terroristic control of the population and considered other ways to influence the population and steer their thoughts in the right direction.

Moreover, the Ministry of Defense also had its own internal police force, the Political Defense Bureau (PDB), responsible for “police related investigations within the armed forces.” However, the MIA also had supervisory responsibility of the PDB. As a result, Kim had established a system of overlapping intelligence and security apparatuses (i.e., the watchmen were watching each other) to exercise “regime control of the North Korean society” by 1950.<sup>126</sup> Kim would take additional steps to reorganize his security apparatus by strengthening the PSB and converting it into a new ministry, the Ministry of Public Security (MPS), in March 1951.<sup>127</sup>

According to Gause, the creation of the MPS signaled Kim’s desire to destroy all opposition to his regime. When close to 700,000 North Koreans left for South Korea during the war, Kim became more suspicious of his people, and many were arrested and later executed or imprisoned.<sup>128</sup> However, Kim added 450,000 new members to the party, mostly peasants and workers, during the war from November 1951 to December 1952. It is more likely he was concerned about those with the wrong class backgrounds such as Japanese collaborators. This is because Kim’s revolution reversed the “social engineering” that it inherited from the Choson Dynasty by “lifting the long-abused North Korean peasants into the position of the favored caste [i.e., core class].”<sup>129</sup> As Armstrong emphasized, the social transformation in North Korea meant that the “most oppressed groups of the pre-1945 society – including poor peasants, workers, women, and your people – were given new roles, material and political benefits, and higher social status in the new regime.” The former elites, to include landlords and rich farmers, lost their wealth and status under the new

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<sup>125</sup> Cumings, *Korea’s Place In The Sun*, pp. 232-235.

<sup>126</sup> Gause, “Coercion, Control, Surveillance, and Punishment,” pp. 92-96.

<sup>127</sup> Gause, “Coercion, Control, Surveillance, and Punishment,” p. 96.

<sup>128</sup> Gause, “Coercion, Control, Surveillance, and Punishment,” p. 96.

<sup>129</sup> Byman and Lind, “Pyongyang’s Survival Strategy,” p. 49.

regime.<sup>130</sup> From the oppressed group's perspective, *North Korea had finally created a hierarchical but just social order.*

According to Robert Collins, North Korea's reclassification of its social order was called *songbun*, which meant one's "ingredient' or material (as in substance or makeup)." The North Korean regime determined the peoples' *songbun* based on their family backgrounds as well as the individuals "socio-political and economic behavior and performance." Collins argued that the aim of Kim's social engineering after liberation was to empower the peasants and workers. This was a popular initiative since 80 percent of the North Korean population was peasants.<sup>131</sup> Hence, as a newly favored class, poor peasants contributed to North Korea becoming a more conservative communist society that opposed social change.<sup>132</sup> As expected, millions from the hostile class (e.g., landlords, merchants, Christians, etc.) left North Korea as the regime persecuted the members of this class. Their relatives who stayed behind were exiled to "isolated mountain areas in northern areas of North Korea."<sup>133</sup>

In 1957, the KWP issued a decree to conduct the first large-scale purge in North Korea, and the separation of the populace into the three social classes became reality. Collins argues that *songbun* became the "starting point for the regime's security policies." In 1958, the regime mobilized 7,000 investigators from KWP's Administration Department, Organization and Guidance Department (OGD), Ministry of Interior and the Prosecutor-General to conduct the *songbun* investigations. The findings resulted in 3,200,000 people being designated as members of the hostile class. However, only 6,000 were imprisoned and 70,000 were exiled to the mountainous Northeast. As they resettled in the isolated areas, their communities later became gulags.<sup>134</sup>

According to Collins, there were additional *songbun* investigations of the entire population in 1966, 1967, 1972, 1980, 1983, and 1989. There were other

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<sup>130</sup> Armstrong, *The North Korean Revolution*, p. 244.

<sup>131</sup> Robert Collins, "Marked for Life: Songbun North Korea's Social Classification System," The Committee for Human Rights in North Korea, 2012, pp. 6-10.

<sup>132</sup> Armstrong, *The North Korean Revolution*, p. 244.

<sup>133</sup> Collins, "Marked for Life," p. 10.

<sup>134</sup> Collins, "Marked for Life," pp. 10-23.

limited investigations of North Koreans who came from the South and those who migrated from Japan in 1980 and 1981, respectively. In 1970, Kim Il-sung formally declared there would be three classes within North Korean society and it was continuously updated through these investigations. The first group consisted of the trusted core class, followed by the suspect wavering class and the undesirable hostile class.<sup>135</sup> However, Suzy Kim highlighted the fact that many Koreans had migrated to Manchuria, China, and Japan during the Japanese colonial period. Some had even traveled to the U.S. and Europe. When these people were forced to construct their own autobiographic narratives as the regime attempted to assess their loyalty, they attempted to defend their colonial experience. Perhaps more importantly, “It was also an occasion for the formulation of one’s future purpose as a way to envision how one’s life fit in with the making of the North Korean revolution.” She concluded that North Koreans attempted to use their personal autobiographies in various forms through the process of trial and error and aimed to “take their destiny into their own hands.” In other words, as one’s *songbun* was being determined by the state, it was plausible for people to learn how to influence the process of *songbun* investigations. Although there was no guarantee that everyone could write their way out of bad *songbun*, however, the process of determining someone’s *songbun* may not have been as mechanical and bureaucratic as it seemed.<sup>136</sup>

Nonetheless, there is no disputing that once people’s *songbun* was determined, it affected “who is employed where, who lives where, who is medically treated where and how, and who is fed by the state.” This social classification system helped Kim to consolidate his power and retain political control of North Korean society.<sup>137</sup> Since the core class consisted of about 30 percent of the populace and the average or wavering class in the middle contained another 40 percent, it left the remaining 30 percent in the hostile

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<sup>135</sup> Collins, “Marked for Life,” pp. 23-24 and 106-107.

<sup>136</sup> Suzy Kim, *Everyday Life in the North Korean Revolution, 1945-1950* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2013), pp. 140-151.

<sup>137</sup> Collins, “Marked for Life,” pp. 10-16.



class for the security services to treat as pariahs.<sup>138</sup> What is surprising is that regardless of *songbun*, most people appeared to have genuinely believed the regime's popular narrative about Kim's "greatness, benevolence and goodness." According to Jane Portal, in addition to his innate charisma, Kim used neo-Confucianism to portray himself as "the idealized [Confucian] gentleman," the sage Kings of Korea.<sup>139</sup> Kim knew what Koreans were familiar with – the symbol of sage Kings – and successfully used it to make the following connection with them:

The genuine affection and respect with which people regarded Kim Il-sung is remarked upon by many observers. There is no doubt that he had charisma and that he held a special appeal for women and children. His talent of establishing a real rapport with ordinary people was at the centre of the Kim cult, however much this may have been manipulated and orchestrated for political ends.<sup>140</sup>

There is no doubt North Korea is a police state, but paradoxically it seems apparent that "terroristic control" alone has not generated and sustained the people's loyalty to Kim and his regime. Helen-Louise Hunter, a former CIA analyst, came to similar conclusions when she noted, "One cannot but be amazed at the overwhelming evidence of the people's strong emotional attachment to Kim. *With all the instruments of control at its disposal, North Korea's leaders could never have created so intense psychological phenomenon had it not been for Kim's own unique personality.*"<sup>141</sup>

#### **4.3.3 Near-Monopoly Control of Communications**

Fourth, under Kim Il-sung's rule, North Korea was "the most closed nation on earth and its people the least informed about the world outside its borders."<sup>142</sup> In most Communist countries, the people had to cope with other

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<sup>138</sup> Hunter, *Kim Il-sung's North Korea*, pp. 3-6.

<sup>139</sup> Portal, *Art Under Control in North Korea*, pp. 98-99.

<sup>140</sup> Portal, *Art Under Control in North Korea*, p. 98.

<sup>141</sup> Hunter, *Kim Il-sung's North Korea*, pp. 22-24.

<sup>142</sup> Kirkpatrick, *Escape from North Korea*, p. 275.

information that challenged the false reality propagated by the regime. The radio was the most popular medium that exposed people to undesirable information. For instance, the Soviets were exposed to Russian-language broadcasts on Voice of America, BBC, and Radio Liberty during the 1970s and 1980s, and this arguably contributed to the fall of the Soviet Union. The North Korean regime removed this threat by prohibiting the “sale and use of free-tuning radio receivers.” By the 1960s, North Koreans could listen only to state-approved radio stations, and just in case some were willing to break the law by converting them into fully functioning radios, the regime’s security services and local citizens groups conducted surprise home inspections. If caught with a real radio, one could expect to spend up to 12 years in prison.<sup>143</sup>

The same could be expected of the print media, the *Nodong Sinmun*. It is the official newspaper of the KWP and “is the mouthpiece of the Party.” The paper was founded by a Soviet Korean named Ki Sok-pok in 1946, and it was reminiscent of *Pravda* of the Stalinist era of 1950. The focus of the newspaper was “to educate, not to entertain” and, as such, the first four pages contained approved stories about the heroic exploits of workers, soldiers, and peasants. Sometimes it included “the greatness and wisdom of the Leaders as well.” Another page was dedicated to the misery of the South Koreans living under American imperialist rule and the last page noted the international news. The same kind of propaganda is also promulgated on North Korean television since it is also manipulated to ensure only the official channels can be watched.<sup>144</sup> Thus, it is no surprise that Reporters Without Borders consistently ranks North Korea as the country with the worst press freedom,<sup>145</sup> and confirms the KWP has near monopoly control of mass communication.<sup>146</sup>

In addition to newspapers, radio broadcasts, and television, North Korea devoted significant amount of resources to promote its arts and live public performances and parades to “carry out revolutionary education of the

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<sup>143</sup> Lankov, *North of the DMZ*, pp. 49-50.

<sup>144</sup> Lankov, *North of the DMZ*, pp. 54-59.

<sup>145</sup> Kirkpatrick, *Escape from North Korea*, p. 276.

<sup>146</sup> Friedrich and Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, pp. 9-10.

public.”<sup>147</sup> As the country’s movie industry was declining, Kim Jong-il abducted South Korean filmmaker Shin Sang-ok and his ex-wife actress Choi Eun-Hee in 1978,<sup>148</sup> and opened a film studio bearing Shin’s name in 1983. He gave Shin all the resources he needed to raise North Korea’s “cinematic profile.” This cinematic work was serious business for Kim Jong-il, and he understood how important it would be for indoctrinating his people. It was a powerful tool to visually demonstrate the regime’s ideals by allowing the “audiences [to] reenact the cinematic ideals” in their everyday lives. According to Kim Suk-young, North Korea used “films, filmed stage productions, and some live stage productions, all engineered to create a simulacrum of utopian family-nation where illusion and reality coexisted in hyperreal performances.” Through various government media and physical activities, people learned the correct political behavior and were expected to live their lives based on the ideal represented by actors, writers, directors and others involved in these activities.<sup>149</sup> Consequently, Shin had to gain the approval of Kim Jong-il to ensure the movie script had the right material for ideological instruction.<sup>150</sup>

While the process of selecting true revolutionaries to work in these fields as artisans was based on one’s revolutionary credentials, Kim Il-sung always believed that the North Korean people had to emulate the example set by his Manchurian guerrillas. As discussed, they were the ones that “rallied rock-solid behind their leader and did not relinquish their faith in any adversity.” After all, what is better than becoming an immortal being by displaying the correct revolutionary and *Juche* spirit? Kim concluded that, as long as his people were united behind him, North Korea would survive.<sup>151</sup> Of course, Kim also portrayed himself as the charismatic being that Koreans were longing for since the end of

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<sup>147</sup> Kim Suk-Young, *Illusive Utopia: Theater, Film, and Everyday Performance in North Korea* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010), pp. 33-59.

<sup>148</sup> Paul Fischer, *A Kim Jong-il Production: The Extraordinary True Story of a Kidnapped Filmmaker, His Start Actress, and A Young Dictator’s Rise to Power* (New York: Flatiron Books, 2015), pp. 256-258.

<sup>149</sup> Kim, *Illusive Utopia*, pp. 33-59.

<sup>150</sup> Fischer, *A Kim Jong-il Production*, pp. 272-273.

<sup>151</sup> Kim, *Selected Works*, Volume I, p. 587.

the Choson Dynasty to create a strong and powerful country.<sup>152</sup> Under these conditions, one can reasonably conclude that the constant repetition of propaganda with its targeted word usage from the state media (and various art forms) would unconsciously inculcate the masses to adopt the value judgments promoted by the Kim regime.<sup>153</sup> However, Paul Fischer claimed North Korean propaganda became useless as the invasion of information intensified in the late-1980s in the form of VHS tapes and DVDs.<sup>154</sup> Fischer overstated the facts, but the point is the regime's control of information was beginning to weaken before Kim's death.

#### **4.3.4 Kim's Complete Control of the KPA**

Fifth, the totalitarian regime also controls the military.<sup>155</sup> As discussed, Kim contended with several factions when he returned to Korea in September 1945 and nearly all of them (with the exception of the domestic Communists from the South) had a select group of officers that formed the core of the KPA. They included officers from the Soviet faction such as Nam Il (KPA Chief of Staff during the Korean War), Yu Song-chol (Director of Operations Bureau, KPA, and interpreter to Soviet Advisory Group), Han Il-mu (KPA corps and Navy commander), and Kim Yil (Political Officer, KPA). The Yenan faction appears to have posed the most significant challenge to Kim. Its extensive combat experience with the CCP prior to liberation was valued, as thirty of its members became KPA generals during the Korean War. They included Mu Chong (senior officer within the Ministry of Defense), Pak Il-wu (Deputy Commander of the Combined Chinese-North Korean Force), Kim Ung (Front Commander of KPA in 1951), and three other corps-level commanders. However, Kim's guerrillas also occupied their share of the KPA's leadership positions. Kim was the supreme commander, Choe Yong-Kon was the Defense Minister, Kim Chaik (aka, Kim Chaek) was the Front Commander in 1950, Choi

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<sup>152</sup> Kim, *Illusive Utopia*, p. 133.

<sup>153</sup> Friedrich and Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, pp. 115-117.

<sup>154</sup> Fischer, *A Kim Jong-il Production*, pp. 308-310.

<sup>155</sup> Friedrich and Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, pp. 9-10.

Hyun commanded a corps, Kang Kon was the KPA Chief of Staff, and O Chin-u and Choi Kwang commanded KPA divisions.<sup>156</sup>

According to Collins, Kim felt threatened by the Yen-an faction after the Chinese intervened in the war, and as a precondition for assistance they expected to lead the combined force, which left the North Koreans as “the auxiliary force.” This meant Chinese General Peng Duhuai had “operational control of the KPA.” Kim responded to the growing threat from the Yen-an faction by using the KPA’s political commissars from the General Political Bureau (GPB). When Pyongyang was captured by the UNC after the Inchon landing, Kim ultimately blamed Mu Chong, and he would continue his purges by relieving Pak Il-wu, another Yen-an faction member, in 1952. In the end, he purged 90 percent of the KPA generals when the Korean War was over.<sup>157</sup> After taking complete control of the KPA, he prized both it and the KWP throughout his rule, but they “alternated slightly in importance” during his rule. When he died in July 1994, his son adopted the *Songun* policy and relied more on the KPA to consolidate his power.<sup>158</sup> This suggests the Kims chose not to “dehumanize” the army since the prospects of war were real on the Korean Peninsula. They needed to have some properly trained military officers even if the Kims did not completely trust them.<sup>159</sup> As insurance, Kim also relied on the Military Security Command (i.e., internal security within the KPA) and the Ministry of State Security (i.e., secret police)<sup>160</sup> to ensure the KPA and its generals remained loyal to him.

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<sup>156</sup> James I. Matray and Donald W. Boose, Jr., eds., *The Ashgate Research Companion to The Korean War* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2014), pp. 256-258.

<sup>157</sup> Matray and Boose, Jr., eds., *The Ashgate Research Companion to The Korean War*, pp. 262-264.

<sup>158</sup> Joseph S. Bermudez Jr., *The Armed Forces of North Korea* (London, UK: I. B. Tauris Publishers, 2001), p. 1.

<sup>159</sup> Friedrich and Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, pp. 276-281.

<sup>160</sup> Bermudez, *The Armed Forces of North Korea*, pp. 197-203.

#### 4.3.5 Initial Economic Wins, Global Outreach, but Ultimate Failure

Finally, totalitarian regimes aim for central command of the whole economy.<sup>161</sup> The intent is to regain control of the means of production from capitalist exploiters,<sup>162</sup> but the management of the whole economy requires a huge number of public officials, both from the state and party bureaucracies. What they end up with is a parallel structure of party and state bureaucracies which some describe as “total bureaucratization” of almost all organizations within the totalitarian system. This results in rising tensions between the state and party officials, as the party eventually attempts to exert its control over the economy. As the totalitarian movement matures, the party bureaucrats and sympathizers successfully penetrate the state organizations and party loyalty replaces professionalism as the primary criterion for office. The system of “cross-espionage and the institutionalization of mutual suspicion” keeps constant observation and surveillance using the secret police and other party organs to ensure political reliability of state bureaucrats.<sup>163</sup>

North Korea’s economic trajectory was influenced by Japan’s industrialization of its empire during the mid-1930s. Japan began to export its heavy industry from the metropole to the colonies, and places like Manchuria and the northern half of the Korean Peninsula “got steel mills, auto plants, petrochemical complexes, and enormous hydroelectric facilities.”<sup>164</sup> However, Jon Halliday pointed out that the Japanese had sabotaged much of the industry before they withdrew from Korea. Although North Korea inherited 65% of heavy industry from the Japanese, it was in total disarray.<sup>165</sup> As a result, it took Pyongyang about two years before it could restore the economic order necessary to take advantage of its high level of industrialization. This effort included Soviet advisors and even some Japanese managers who remained to help revive the old Japanese industries that were in disrepair and set the basic

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<sup>161</sup> Friedrich and Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, pp. 9-10.

<sup>162</sup> Friedrich and Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, pp. 191-192.

<sup>163</sup> Friedrich and Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, pp. 177-182.

<sup>164</sup> Cumings, *Korea’s Place in the Sun*, pp. 175-180.

<sup>165</sup> Jon Halliday, “The North Korean Enigma,” *New Left Review*, I/1 27 (May-June 1981), pp. 23-24.

conditions for realizing North Korea's command economy. Armstrong also credits the North Koreans for the role they played in jump-starting the economy and Kim's own focus on developing a self-reliant national economy.<sup>166</sup>

Kim instituted land reforms in 1946, nationalized industry, and devised more effective ways to collect revenue to fund his industrialization. Kim also used "moral exhortation, material incentives, and when necessary force and punishment" to increase worker productivity. By 1949, life in North Korea was difficult but people had enough to eat and had access to education and housing, even if party members had privileged access to food and other goods. More importantly, rapid control of the economy and heavy industrialization positioned North Korea for war "with great speed and efficiency."<sup>167</sup> This meant that by June 1950, just before the war started, North Korea had managed to exceed pre-1945 levels of economic production.<sup>168</sup>

The Korean War left the Korean Peninsula devastated, and up to three million Koreans from both sides were killed. At the end of the war, Pyongyang stated its economy had regressed to 40% of its industrial and consumer goods output in 1949. Moreover, it claimed the war destroyed about 750,000 homes, its transportation infrastructure, electrical power generation, the chemical industry, and fuel production. In other words, North Korea was "virtually destroyed as an industrial society." Kim's top priority was to rebuild the country and he was able to recover his industrial economy faster than the South, despite the severe damage caused by U.S. carpet-bombing of his cities and mass exodus of the people to the South. In fact, the North's growth probably outpaced the South into the early 1970s. While Armstrong gave credit to the Soviets, remnants of Japanese colonial managers, and the North Koreans themselves for resuscitating the economy after liberation, he drew special attention to the assistance that the North attracted from the Communist bloc for rebuilding the country after the war. He describes this effort from 1953 to 1962

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<sup>166</sup> Armstrong, *The North Korean Revolution*, pp. 163-165.

<sup>167</sup> Armstrong, *The North Korean Revolution*, pp. 163-165.

<sup>168</sup> Armstrong, "Fraternal Socialism", p. 162.

by the socialist bloc as “the first and only time the Soviet Union, China and the Soviet-aligned countries of Eastern Europe and Mongolia cooperated in a multilateral development project of such scale.”<sup>169</sup>

Kim took advantage of this sympathy and generosity from the Communist bloc by devising his own economic plan for reconstruction in August 1953, and it initially focused on a preparatory period of up to one year to assess the damage from the war and draft the plan to rebuild the country. He then earmarked three years (1954-1956) for the economy to catch up to pre-war levels of development. Once that was achieved, Kim planned to launch “a Five-Year Plan [1957-1961] for the general industrialization of the entire country.” Kim warned his people they would have to make great sacrifices, but reminded them that they had already demonstrated they could do this after liberation, and now they had the support of their fraternal comrades along with the country’s abundant natural resources. It helped the cause when the Soviets provided 33.3% of the aid, China 29.4%, and the rest of the Soviet bloc provided the remainder (37.3%) from 1953 to 1960. The East Germans led the rest of the pack with 14% of aid, followed by Poland (9.3%), Czech Republic (6.9%), and Romania, Hungary, Bulgaria, Albania, Mongolia, and North Vietnam providing token aid and assistance.<sup>170</sup>

In addition to the sympathetic aid and assistance from their fraternal brothers in the Communist bloc, North Koreans were mobilized again, just as they had been prior to and during the Korean War, and their industrial sector recovered rapidly. The Soviets hoped most of the production from these industries would continue to be a “source of primary goods” for Moscow but Kim was already envisioning “autarky rather than incorporation into a Soviet-centered international division of labour.” Moreover, the priority of the self-reliant effort was his military complex, and that would trump calls for producing consumer goods for the people. Despite their differences, the Soviets built over

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<sup>169</sup> Armstrong, “‘Fraternal Socialism’,” pp. 161-162.

<sup>170</sup> Armstrong, “‘Fraternal Socialism’,” p. 165. According to Armstrong, the East Germans had been supporting the North Koreans since September 1950 (e.g., provided 11.6 million Deutsche Marks worth of supplies, to include about 150,000 kilograms of medicine and two ambulances).



40 new factories after the war and transferred technology to Pyongyang gratis, perhaps providing up to \$690 million in aid by 1959. According to the Soviets, by 1960 (i.e., end of the Five-Year Plan) their “aid accounted for 40% of North Korea’s electricity generation, 53% of coke production, 51% of cast iron, 22% of steel, 45% of reinforced concrete blocks and 65% of cotton fabric.”<sup>171</sup>

After this period of largesse by the Communist bloc, foreign aid was reduced significantly in the early 1960s even though Pyongyang continued to rely on long-term loans from them until the collapse of the Soviet Union. While the North’s command economy owned 98% of its industry and almost 81% of its farms were collectivized by 1956, it failed to achieve the goals of the Seven-Year Plan (1961-1967) and stopped publishing its economic output after the mid-1960s.<sup>172</sup> According to Vice Premier Kim Il, the sense of abandonment after the Cuban Missile Crisis militarized North Korean society as it felt compelled to maintain 700,000 men in the KPA and another 200,000 in the police. This was a huge financial burden and Pyongyang began to miss its economic goals.<sup>173</sup> Armstrong argued this period could be seen “as the beginning of North Korea’s long, protracted economic decline” but it was difficult to notice from the outside as some Western economists still touted it as “an alternative development theory” in 1974.<sup>174</sup>

Kim Da-sool, the lead delegate for the South Korean Red Cross during the North-South Red Cross talks during early 1970s also noted that even the South Koreans had assumed the North’s economy was perhaps more advanced than that of the South at the time. However, as the two sides rotated the sites for the talks between Seoul and Pyongyang, the South Korean delegation “realized that the North Korean economy was nowhere near where

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<sup>171</sup> Armstrong, “‘Fraternal Socialism’,” pp. 165-170.

<sup>172</sup> Armstrong, “‘Fraternal Socialism’,” p. 170.

<sup>173</sup> Person, “The Cuban Missile Crisis and the Origins of North Korea’s Policy of Self-Reliance in National Defense,” p. 3.

<sup>174</sup> Armstrong, “‘Fraternal Socialism’,” p. 170.

we had thought it might be,” but the country seemed “much more militarized.”<sup>175</sup> Many observers had a positive view of the North Korean economy in the early 1970s even as Pyongyang was defaulting on its loans to Western and Japanese banks in late 1974.<sup>176</sup> According to Cumings, during the 1960s and the 1970s, North Korea attracted attention from the Third World as a model country. In fact, when Che Guevara visited the country in the 1960s, he “proclaimed it a vision of what Cuba would eventually become,” and some economists promoted its economy as a “‘miracle economy’.”<sup>177</sup> Thus, it was not surprising that the North Koreans were able to secure capital and modern technology after the socialist camp could not satisfy them after 1962. Its opportunity to obtain them from the West came after Cold War tensions began to ease in the early 1970s.<sup>178</sup>

Pyongyang managed to attract almost \$600 million dollars in contracts with firms in Japan and West Europe from 1970 to 1975. Japan, France, and West Germany became the top three trading partners to North Korea, respectively. For instance, West German firms such as Siemens were upgrading North Korean industries in the 1970s that were “rebuilt by the East Germans in the 1950s.” In return, the North exported magnesite, copper, zinc, silver, and other raw materials to West Germany. However, the global recession that followed the 1973 oil shock impacted North Korea as well and it defaulted on \$200-300 million of its loans by mid-1975.<sup>179</sup>

Nevertheless, it was still worthy of admiration and trust and Gavan McCormack and John Gittings continued to argue that Pyongyang had reportedly achieved the goals of the 1970-1976 economic plan. Its purchase of Western industrial plants, with short-term credits, did not seem unusual as North Korea’s trade with the non-Communist world increased from almost none

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<sup>175</sup> Christian F. Ostermann and James F. Person, eds., *The Rise and Fall of Détente on the Korean Peninsula, 1970-1974* (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 2011), pp. x and 87.

<sup>176</sup> Armstrong, “*Juche* and North Korea’s Global Aspirations,” pp. 1-8.

<sup>177</sup> Cumings, “Divided Korea,” pp. 57-58.

<sup>178</sup> Armstrong, “*Juche* and North Korea’s Global Aspirations,” pp. 1-8.

<sup>179</sup> Armstrong, “*Juche* and North Korea’s Global Aspirations,” pp. 1-8.

in the mid-1950s to 27% by the end of the 1960s.<sup>180</sup> They argued, “At worst, it temporarily bit off more than it could chew,” and had a positive assessment of the *Juche* path of its economy. They forecasted Pyongyang would eventually produce its own advanced technology at home, expand its domestic energy sector via hydroelectricity, and increase exports of minerals, consumer goods, and machine tools. Moreover, they claimed the South’s economy was in much worse shape with its “house built on sand” and “ultra-dependent economy.”<sup>181</sup>

By the fall of 1976, it was clear McCormack and Gittings were wrong. As North Korea’s economy was feeling the pressure as its economic outreach to the West faltered, it decided to pursue illicit activities in Europe. This was particularly damning since most of these activities occurred in Scandinavia, whose countries made a sincere attempt to improve relations with Pyongyang. In October 1976, Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden all reported that North Korean diplomats were taking advantage of their tax exempt status by selling “alcohol and cigarettes on the black market.” In Denmark, the police suspected they were also selling illicit drugs and subsequently Denmark, Finland, and Norway expelled the North Koreans without consulting Pyongyang. On the other hand, Sweden decided to consult North Korea to avoid the impression there was a joint Nordic action against it. According to Erik Cornell, the Swedish Chargé d'affaires to Pyongyang at the time, North Korea wanted a face-saving way out since its ambassador was being implicated in the incident. Cornell made it clear to his North Korean counterparts that only those guilty of the crimes would be expelled and not all of the Embassy staff. He also suggested that Pyongyang should recall these officials before Sweden was forced to expel them. The North Koreans accepted the suggestion when Sweden pledged not to implicate their Ambassador with these crimes and to keep the matter as low key as possible. Cornell concluded, “Any negotiation

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<sup>180</sup> McCormack Gavan and John Gittings, eds., *Crisis in Korea* (Nottingham, UK: Spokesman Books), pp. 98-100.

<sup>181</sup> McCormack and Gittings, eds., *Crisis in Korea*, pp. 98-100.

worth its name would have to take place in Pyongyang, where those in power did not actually take part but were at least indirectly accessible.”<sup>182</sup>

A report citing a North Korean defector in November 1976 indicated that Pyongyang had directed “every town and district” to create “work companies” to earn hard currency. These companies across the country grew “peppermint, ginseng, medicinal herbs and mushrooms” to support the “newly established purchasing centre for foreign currency.”<sup>183</sup> What this suggests is that it is plausible that North Korea may have established its “web of state trading companies”<sup>184</sup> as early as the mid-1970s, but it was not fully understood until John S. Park described it as North Korea, Inc., with his work on North Korea’s trading companies in 2009. Park has argued that North Korea created its network of trading companies that belongs to the KWP, KPA, and the Cabinet to generate revenue to support the 13th World Festival of Youth and Students. This event was hosted by Pyongyang in 1989, and it sought to recover from the loss of face due to the successful 1988 Olympic Games in Seoul. Despite the Festival being a drain on the regime’s coffers, these companies “became a model for other DPRK state trading companies” and their revenues would keep the core institutions of the government functioning.<sup>185</sup>

Moreover, even as the North’s economy muddled through the 1970s and 1980s, indications are the PDS did not break down completely under Kim Il-sung. When Kim died in 1994, one study indicated the majority of the people (60.6%) were still getting their food through the PDS. Others acquired their food primarily through markets (16.3%), personal plots (4.2%), bartering (3.7%), and finally foraging (11.9%).<sup>186</sup> In other words, the majority of North Koreans under Kim Il-sung had reasonable access to food and only about 12% had to forage for food. Thus, some argue that North Korea under Kim maintained “a

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<sup>182</sup> Erik Cornell, *North Korea Under Communism: Report of an Envoy to Paradise* (New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2002), p. 66.

<sup>183</sup> Cornell, *North Korea Under Communism*, p. 72.

<sup>184</sup> Park, “North Korea, Inc.,” pp. 6-7.

<sup>185</sup> Park, “North Korea, Inc.,” pp. 1-7.

<sup>186</sup> W. Courtland Robinson, Myung Ken Lee, Kenneth Hill, and Gilbert M. Burnham, “Mortality in North Korean migrant households: a retrospective study,” *The Lancet*, Vol. 354, July 24, 1999, p. 293.

rigid command economy during the Cold War.”<sup>187</sup> Still others claimed Kim Il-sung “picked a convenient time to die, one that would prevent his legacy from being tarnished by the catastrophic events of the coming years.” In sum, despite the totalitarian character of his regime, Kim understood his people and aptly used neo-Confucianism and his cult of personality to soften his rule and, in the end, most North Koreans remember his rule “with nostalgia at the relative plenty they had enjoyed during his lifetime.”<sup>188</sup> This is surprising when one considers the totalitarian character of his rule. How can this be explained? Next, the study addresses the kind of leadership and legitimacy Kim exercised during his rule.

#### **4.3.6 Kim’s Leadership Style and Legitimacy**

As discussed earlier, Kim did not rely solely on terroristic control to rule North Korea. Kim Il-sung appears to have understood that force and legitimacy were both key sources of power and that they have a relationship – “force without legitimacy brings chaos; legitimacy without force will be overthrown.”<sup>189</sup> There seems to be near consensus that Kim ultimately enjoyed loyalty from the regime’s key institutions and the people, but what kind of legitimacy did he have? According to Max Weber, the discussion of legitimacy begins by first defining the concept of authority. Weber defines authority as “the probability that a specific command will be obeyed.” Moreover, authority that is obeyed for pure interest (pragmatic calculus), mere custom (habitual behavior), or mere affect (personal devotion of the follower) is judged to be relatively unstable.<sup>190</sup> What is required for stability is legitimacy and there are three kinds of legitimate authority.

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<sup>187</sup> Hazel Smith, *North Korea: Markets and Military Rule* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 327.

<sup>188</sup> Barbara Demick, *Nothing to Envy: Ordinary Lives in North Korea* (New York: Spiegel & Grau, 2009), p. 115.

<sup>189</sup> Robert Cooper, *The Breaking of Nations: Order and Chaos in the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Atlantic Monthly, 2003), p.88.

<sup>190</sup> Max Weber, “The Three Types of Legitimate Rule,” *Berkeley Publications in society and institutions*, Vol. 4, No. 1, 1958, p. 1.

The first is legal authority where the purest type is based on the bureaucracy, and the people obey the rules and regulations, to include the person in authority.<sup>191</sup> In 1948, North Korea promulgated its first Constitution and drew significantly from the constitutional traditions of the Soviets. For instance, it granted rights to the country's ethnic minorities even though nearly all of its citizens were Koreans. At the same time, there were many factions vying for power and the KWP made concessions such as allowing private ownership of property and businesses. It "also granted a long series of guaranteed rights, and privileges to citizens, such as freedom of speech, the right to religious practice, and the right to be free from arbitrary arrest and detention." However, it was only a matter of time before the Constitution was subordinated to the KWP as Kim consolidated his power. This reality was revealed when the North revised its Constitution in 1972. *Juche* became the state's guiding ideology and elements that were borrowed from the Soviets were omitted from the revised version. Kim also became the first (and only) President of North Korea and it was evident he "was accountable to no one."<sup>192</sup> Although one could argue this indicated that Kim used legal authority to legitimize his rule, he was clearly above the laws and regulations as the Supreme Leader. In other words, while he did not ignore the concept of legal authority, it is safe to say this is not how he derived his authority and legitimacy.

In the second case of legitimacy, the focus is on traditional authority with the purest type being patriarchal authority. It upholds the belief in the old social order and tradition, and the people "are completely and personally dependent on the lord." Even the system's administrators are completely dependent on the ruler and, as a result, the ruler can indiscriminately exercise his authority. Weber noted that "sultanistic rule" represented the extreme form of patriarchal authority type,<sup>193</sup> and Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan have argued that Kim Il-sung

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<sup>191</sup> Weber, "The Three Types of Legitimate Rule," p. 2.

<sup>192</sup> Daren C. Zook, "Reforming North Korea: Law, Politics, and the Market Economy," *Stanford Journal of International Law*, Vol. 48, No. 1, 2012, pp. 134-139.

<sup>193</sup> Zook, "Reforming North Korea," pp. 3-4.

was one of the few modern sultanistic rulers.<sup>194</sup> However, Linz and Stepan also suggested that sultanistic rule is not a form of totalitarian rule since it does not have a ruling ideology.<sup>195</sup> As a result, since *Juche* is the guiding ideology in the North, sultanistic rule should be ruled out, while patriarchal authority seems to describe how Kim eventually exercised his legitimacy.

The final type of legitimacy is charismatic authority where the adoration of the people to the ruler and the ruler's "gifts of grace (charisma)" form the base of legitimacy. The purest form includes "the rule of the prophet, the warrior hero, [and] the great demagogue." The ruler is usually referred to as the leader and is followed by the disciple. The followers obey the ruler for his exceptional qualities and they remain loyal as long as the ruler's charisma "is proven by evidence." In short, if the charismatic ruler loses heroic strength or the people lose faith in the ruler's leadership ability, the ruler's reign would end. The ruler must achieve success or his authority may weaken. Furthermore, the system's administrators are selected based on their own charisma and personal loyalty to the ruler, and not on any special qualification. This is crucial since the system's success depends on the unity of the ruler and his administrators.<sup>196</sup>

Some critics of Weber have noted that he failed to "make clear whether this gift of grace was a quality possessed by leaders independent of society or a quality dependent on its recognition by followers." Others even argued "charismatic phenomenon" does not have to be tied to Weber because it could be due to the person with the gift of grace, the unique situation, or the combination of both. Still others focus on the importance of followers in their discussion of charismatic leadership.<sup>197</sup> On the other hand, James Macgregor Burns completely abandoned the use of the term charisma because it "has been so overburdened" and it failed to serve as an analytical tool "under close

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<sup>194</sup> Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), p. 51.

<sup>195</sup> Linz and Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation*, p. 53.

<sup>196</sup> Weber, "The Three Types of Legitimate Rule," pp. 6-8.

<sup>197</sup> Bryan Shaun Charles Watters, "Contemporary British Military Leadership In The Early Twenty First Century," (PhD diss., University of Leeds Business School, February 2008), pp. 54-58.

analysis.” Burns preferred the term “heroic leadership,” which he defined as follows:

[B]elief in leaders because of their personage alone, aside from their tested capacities, experience, or stand on issues; faith in the leaders’ capacity to overcome obstacles and crises; readiness to grant to leaders the powers to handle crises; mass support for such leaders expressed directly – through votes, applause, letters, shaking hands – rather than through intermediaries of institutions....*A crucial aspect of this relationship is the absence of conflict.*<sup>198</sup>

The heroic leader appears when the existing system and its leadership fails to deliver during crisis and provides opportunities for others “equipped with rare gifts of compassion and competence” to challenge existing authority and tradition.<sup>199</sup> Others agreed with Burns in part because charisma was often linked to dictators and dictatorships, and tended to minimize the concept of transformational leadership by being “an all embracing term” for it.<sup>200</sup>

Despite the criticism, one cannot ignore “there is a consensus in the literature” that Weber is the established model for the discussion on charisma<sup>201</sup> and it appears to be a valid concept to analyze the Kim family leadership. This is particularly true when one recognizes that Weber’s discussion of charisma was insightful enough to foresee the problem of leadership succession and how it would evolve during transitions of leadership. He noted that one way is for the charismatic leader to select his successor and gain the support of his religious or military elite. Sometimes, this could lead to “hereditary charisma” where the essential qualification is the blood ties to the leader.<sup>202</sup> I will revisit how hereditary charisma applied to both Kim Jong-il and Kim Jong-un in Chapter 7, to avoid redundancy, by explaining how Kim Il-sung’s successors were chosen

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<sup>198</sup> James Macgregor Burns, *Leadership* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1978), pp. 243-244.

<sup>199</sup> Burns, *Leadership*, p. 244.

<sup>200</sup> Watters, “Contemporary British Military Leadership In The Early Twenty First Century,” pp. 54-58.

<sup>201</sup> Watters, “Contemporary British Military Leadership In The Early Twenty First Century,” p. 54.

<sup>202</sup> Weber, “The Three Types of Legitimate Rule,” pp. 6-8.



largely based on their patrimonial lineage to the pure blood of Kim Il-sung and his first wife Kim Jong-suk.

In the end, both patriarchal and charismatic authority offers a valid form of legitimacy for Kim Il-sung but legal authority seems less relevant for him. This leads to a discussion about power, which Nye admitted “is a contested concept,” but offered his own definition of power as being “the ability to alter others’ behavior to produce preferred outcomes.”<sup>203</sup> That said, Bryan Watters highlighted many ways to obtain and exercise power: 1) Reward Power (i.e., rewarding followers for compliance),<sup>204</sup> 2) Coercive Power (i.e., obtaining compliance with threats), 3) Legitimate Power (discussed above), 4) Referent Power (i.e., “trusted and respected” by others), 5) Expert Power (i.e., derived from “experiences, skills or knowledge”), 6) Information Power (e.g., those in charge possess “needed or wanted information” to gain temporary advantage),<sup>205</sup> 7) Position Power (i.e., combination of legitimate, reward and punishment powers), 8) Personal Power (i.e., derived from combination of expert and referent powers), 9) Remunerative power (i.e., offering of material rewards), and 10) Normative Power (i.e., offering of symbolic rewards).<sup>206</sup> As shown above, despite the totalitarian character of the regime, the story of Kim Il-sung’s rise and consolidation of power indicates that, like many other leaders, he probably used all of these ways to gain and wield power during his rule.

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<sup>203</sup> Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Future of Power*, p. 10. Nye offers other definitions of power such as “the ability to get what we want,” “the ability to make or resist change,” or “the capacity to do things and in social situations to affect others to get the outcomes we want.” For the latter, Nye laments that some equate it with influence which confuses the discussion about power.

<sup>204</sup> Gina Abudi, “The Five Types of Power in Leadership,” Intuit QuickBase, <http://quickbase.intuit.com/blog/2011/08/26/the-5-types-of-power-in-leadership/> (accessed August 6, 2015). Abudi’s discussion of the bases of power breaks them down into two parts: formal and personal power. Formal power is derived from the combination of coercive, reward and legitimate powers, and personal power results from expert and referent powers.

<sup>205</sup> Vivian Giang, “The 7 Types Of Power That Shape The Workplace,” <http://www.businessinsider.com/the-7-types-of-power-that-shape-the-workplace-2013-7> (accessed August 7, 2015). Giang also introduces the concept of connection power, which she described as “where a person attains influence by gaining favor or simply acquaintance with a powerful person. This power is all about networking.”

<sup>206</sup> Watters, “Contemporary British Military Leadership In The Early Twenty First Century,” pp. 44-46.

For instance, Kim used his anti-Japanese legacy to legitimize his rule and used the totalitarian system to ensure near monopoly control of information. He was not afraid to use coercive power to maintain control and to eliminate his enemies but Kim also used a combination of reward, referent, and positional power by effectively using his propaganda organs to establish a cult of personality that addressed the Korean people's desire for independence from foreign domination. In spite of this, Daniel Chirot argued that Kim was a tyrant because he attempted to "control all thought" of his people by portraying himself as a "Confucian sage." If Kim truly believed in his legitimacy to rule, it would not have been necessary to manufacture his cult of personality. The fact he did so "proved Kim lacked the support of his people similar to other tyrannies." Nevertheless, Chirot admitted, "It is much harder to tell what people really think in North Korea" because it is so isolated from the outside world.<sup>207</sup> As discussed earlier, a former CIA analyst Helen-Louise Hunter concluded Kim used his charisma to connect with the people, which implied he was not a mere tyrant in the traditional sense. If so, what kind of leadership style did he have?

According to Peter Northouse, "one of the more widely recognized approaches to leadership is the situational approach" that suggests "different situations demand different kind of leadership." In other words, to be an effective leader a leader must be capable of adapting "his or her style to the demands of different situations."<sup>208</sup> Thus, the situational approach includes four different leadership styles that attempt to identify "the behavior patterns of a person who attempts to influence other." They include directing (i.e., focusing on giving "instructions about what and how goals are to be achieved" by followers and providing careful supervision), coaching (i.e., focusing on directing as well as encouraging followers and eliciting their input), supporting (i.e., goals are important but "gives subordinates control of day-to-day decisions" while the leader is available to help solve problems), and delegating (i.e., focuses on

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<sup>207</sup> Daniel Chirot, *Modern Tyrants: The Power and Prevalence of Evil in Our Age* (New York: The Free Press, 1994), pp. 247-248.

<sup>208</sup> Peter G. Northouse, *Leadership: Theory and Practice*, 7th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc., 2016), p. 93.

letting “subordinates take responsibility for getting the job done the way they see fit”).<sup>209</sup> The fact that Kim Jong-il was able to establish a monolithic guidance system to control his party elites by 1973,<sup>210</sup> suggests Kim Il-sung probably delegated his authority to his son in the early 1970s. Moreover, as noted earlier, Kim’s MSD guerrillas formed the core leadership of his regime which “was strong enough to shape the basic configuration of north Korean political culture.”<sup>211</sup> They were his followers but they were also his loyal comrades as well and he trusted many of them to help him achieve his aims.

As Table 4.1 indicated, by 1961, Kim added 25 more of his guerrilla faction to the KWP’s Central Committee (CC) and almost a decade later 13 more were added to the CC. It seems plausible that as he consolidated power, Kim empowered his guerrilla comrades to help him achieve his goals. Suzy Kim appears to support this assertion. She argued that Kim Il-sung criticized the leaders of the local people’s committees (PCs) in 1952 for “coercively ordering the people around” like former colonial officials “rather than motivating them and working on their behalf as their ‘loyal servants’.” He reportedly advised that the leaders of the PCs should not “do all the work themselves, but rather to *delegate*, engaging the participation of the majority of the people.” As North Korea was rebuilding itself after the Korean War, Kim encouraged them “to become self-reliant, ‘creatively deciding what to do in accordance with local conditions’ rather than ‘moving when pushed from the top, standing still without push, working like a machine by command, like puppets play’.” Suzy Kim implies that this kind of direct democracy based on the PCs began to change after 1972, as they merged with the cooperative farms.<sup>212</sup> As we have seen in Chapter 2, Kim may have been willing to delegate because he was so confident that everything was going according to plan until the early 1970s.

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<sup>209</sup> Peter G. Northouse, *Leadership: Theory and Practice*, 6th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc., 2013), pp. 101-102.

<sup>210</sup> Lim, *Kim Jong Il’s Leadership of North Korea*, p. 68.

<sup>211</sup> Han, “Wounded Nationalism,” pp. 331-337 and pp. 353-354.

<sup>212</sup> Kim, *Everyday Life in the North Korean Revolution*, pp. 247-248.

The evidence suggests Kim was probably capable of exercising all four styles of leadership, to include some aspects of the delegating leadership style. In other words, after Kim purged his main opposition by the mid-1950s, he began to empower his trusted lieutenants and they helped him run the day-to-day operations of the affairs of state as they saw fit. To be sure, they were also subject to careful monitoring, and if they failed to meet Kim's expectations, they were likely to be purged (e.g., his guerrilla comrades who failed during the Second Korean War). Along with the members of the Kim family (e.g., his younger brother Kim Young-ju and later Kim Jong-il), many of Kim's Manchurian guerrillas and select group of loyal elites such as Pang Hak-se from the Soviet faction served him well.<sup>213</sup> Others like the Kapsan group were not initially purged and appear to have been empowered, but when they challenged Kim's authority over the succession issue in 1967, they too were purged. What does this mean for the role of brute power in Kim's leadership style?

According to Burns, "The leadership approach tends often unconsciously to be elitist; it projects heroic figures against the shadowy background of drab, powerless masses." His aim is to highlight both the leader and the follower and judging the effectiveness of leaders "by actual social change measured by intent and satisfaction of human needs and expectations." This means leadership goes beyond "mere power-holding" and is the antithesis of brute power. Subsequently, he identified transactional and transforming leadership as the two basic types of leadership. The transactional leadership defined as "leaders approach[ing] followers with an eye to exchanging one thing for another: jobs for votes, or subsidies for campaign contributions." On the other hand, transforming leadership is defined as identifying and exploiting "an existing need or demand of a potential follower" and the creating a "relationship of mutual stimulation and elevation that converts follower into leaders and may convert leaders into moral agents."<sup>214</sup> However, Watters pointed out that

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<sup>213</sup> Gause, "Coercion, Control, Surveillance, and Punishment," pp. 92-95.

<sup>214</sup> Burns, *Leadership*, pp. 3-4.

transformational leadership can be both positive and negative by noting that Adolf Hitler was a transformative leader albeit a negative one.<sup>215</sup>

According to Chirot, Hitler as well as Mao and Stalin, “were all thought to be exceptionally skillful at adapting to new circumstances, listening to other opinions within their parties, and learning from their experiences.”<sup>216</sup> Moreover, Burns credited Mao with being a “gifted political leader” because he understood what the masses needed and “the way in which those needs could be activated and channeled.” This allowed Mao to lead a transforming revolution in China that changed the very fabric of Chinese culture and society. This kind of revolutionary leadership can succeed when it has a “powerful value system,” can respond to the needs of the people, and can suppress dissent. However, Burns implied that despite the need to suppress dissent, what men like Mao accomplished “qualifies as leadership when it [revolutionary leadership] is reciprocal in a situation of open conflict and as brute power when it is not.”<sup>217</sup> In other words, when revolutionary leaders believe only they possess the truth, they become tyrants.<sup>218</sup> As a result, one could argue that the evidence shown above suggests Kim Il-sung also led a transforming revolution in North Korea. Yet, when the regime promoted his cult of personality in the 1960s, his son instituted the monolithic guidance system in 1973, and the economy began to collapse near the end of his reign, Kim Il-sung eventually became more of a tyrant (albeit a popular one) and a negative transformational and transactional leader. This discussion of leadership will provide the basis for examining his successors’ leadership styles in chapters 6 and 7.

#### 4.4 Summary

First, I have argued that Kim Il-sung had an uncanny ability to outmaneuver more qualified opponents, both at home and abroad, to consolidate his power in North Korea, and set the conditions for reunification

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<sup>215</sup> Watters, “Contemporary British Military Leadership In The Early Twenty First Century,” p. 59.

<sup>216</sup> Chirot, *Modern Tyrants*, p. 421.

<sup>217</sup> Burns, *Leadership*, pp. 235-239.

<sup>218</sup> Chirot, *Modern Tyrants*, p. 421.

during the early years of his rule. Most of all, Kim believed he had more legitimacy to rule all of Korea as a former anti-Japanese guerrilla fighter, even though he hid his sojourn in the RFE and created the myth on Mt. Paekdu, than the leaders of the South who were largely former Japanese collaborators. His Manchurian experience taught him how to lead men under difficult conditions, including subordinating himself and his men to the CCP. Kim knew he was not allowed to fight for Korean independence until the CCP had defeated the Japanese, and as a Korean, even he would be vulnerable to accusations of being a pro-Japanese spy. He would overcome the MSD purge to pardon the alleged group of MSD members at Mount Maan and, consequently, they would form a special bond with him and remain loyal to him as they fought the Japanese and returned to Korea after joining the Soviet Army in the RFE.

Second, when Kim and his guerrilla comrades arrived in North Korea, they contested for power with five other factions to create a new nation under Soviet tutelage, and eventually gain the upper hand as other factions lacked their organization and leadership. Some of Kim's comrades would die during the Korean War but those remaining continued to help him purge the other factions in the midst of war and consolidated their power as they rebuilt the country after the war. The Soviet and the Yenan factions decided to challenge Kim's authority in 1956, and he had to tolerate a joint intervention from Moscow and Beijing for a little while, but eventually he purged most of his enemies by 1961. The final opposition from the Kapsan faction was eliminated in 1967. Whenever the North faced difficulty, he invoked the symbolic arduous march to call on his people to follow the lead of his guerrilla fighters who sacrificed everything for the Korean revolution.

Third, Kim managed to create a totalitarian system with Korean characteristics, which softened the terroristic control aspect of the Soviet system with his cult of personality mixed with elements of neo-Confucianism and an ideology based on Korea's long desire to seek self-reliance and independence from foreign interference. Kim seemed to know he needed both power and legitimacy. Kim appears to have started his Cult of Personality by

1956 to strengthen his legitimacy, but it intensified during the Chinese Cultural Revolution in the 1960s as the Chinese became more hostile to Kim and North Korea.<sup>219</sup> While he relied on his security services and the KPA to maintain control of key institutions and the populace, he also had charisma to lead his people as the *Suryong* and depended on his trusted lieutenants to achieve his aims. It is also true that near the end of his rule, near monopoly control of information began to weaken, but he still managed to spread effective propaganda. Kim used education, various forms of art, and public activities to inculcate in his people how to live the life of a true revolutionary. North Koreans learned from books, movies, operas, and everyday life activities to become loyal revolutionaries of the Kim regime. Furthermore, the KWP served him as the single party comprised of a loyal core elite coupled with Kim's *Juche* ideology that was easy for Koreans to understand after centuries of being subservient to China, and their recent experience with Japanese colonialism. Kim's regime faced many challenges during his rule, but he appears to have earned the genuine admiration of his people and still "lives" as the eternal President.

Fourth, Kim managed to achieve early economic success during the post-Korean War period with aid from the Socialist bloc, but growth was unsustainable without reform. The economy began to decline in the 1970s and Pyongyang flirted with illicit activities in Europe after its economic outreach to the West and Japan failed miserably and had to encourage everyone to earn hard currency by selling locally produced commodities. In other words, he laid the foundation for North Korea Inc. in the 1970s, and his regime just barely managed to exercise its "command" of the economy until his death. Finally, one could argue Kim initially practiced positive transformational leadership but his promotion of the cult of personality and eventual collapse of the North Korean economy degraded his leadership type to one of negative transformational and transactional leadership. In spite of this, Kim did not rely only on brute force to

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<sup>219</sup> Bernd Schaefer, "North Korean "Adventurism" and China's Long Shadow, 1966-1972," North Korea International Documentation Project, Working Paper #44, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, October 2004, pp. 3-11.

survive and hold power. He depended on many of his guerrilla comrades as well as other core elites that he trusted and managed to gain the admiration of his people with his charisma. Next, the study examines several cases to determine whether Kim used smart power strategies to achieve his aims during his rule.



## CHAPTER 5

### THE KIMS' LONG WAR OF REUNIFICATION

*One of the more extraordinary features of Kim's [Kim Il-sung] foreign policy was his uncanny ability to navigate between Great Power interests to achieve his own ends. He was the original author of the Korean War, but it was Stalin who made it possible and Mao who largely fought it. After the war, he was able to secure his position by playing China and the Soviet Union against each other, as well as obtain vast amounts of economic aid from both powers. The end of the cold war closed North Korea's sources of support, but Kim again showed his extraordinary ability to leverage competing interests for his gain, this time by playing the nuclear card.<sup>1</sup>*

- Shelia Miyoshi Jager

#### 5.1 Introduction

After examining how Kim consolidated his power as the Supreme Leader of North Korea, the purpose of this chapter is to examine what Kim Il-sung managed to accomplish by pursuing his strategy of reunification. This is an important question because no matter how uncanny his ability was in manipulating the great powers, his smart power attempts failed to achieve reunification before his death. According to Nicholas Eberstadt, Kim's "plan for unification-by-conquest was not a madman's dream, but rather a careful, calculating, high-risk venture." He went on to argue that when the dream of reunification failed, Kim "evidently had no 'fall-back plan'." In other words, he manipulated others to achieve his aims but by stubbornly pursuing forced reunification, North Korea "was caught in a trap of its own design."<sup>2</sup> However, what the evidence suggests is that, while North Korea persistently attempted to achieve reunification during Kim's rule and ultimately failed, he came close to achieving his aim during the Korean War and managed to humiliate the Americans during the so-called Second Korean War in the late 1960s. More

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<sup>1</sup> Jager, *Brothers at War*, p. 434.

<sup>2</sup> Eberstadt, *The End of North Korea*, p. 7.

importantly, Kim's provocations were designed to be low-risk ventures after the 1960s and his fall-back plan was to designate his son as successor in the early 1970s. In short, while Kim failed to achieve reunification with smart power attempts, he managed to consolidate his power, played the nuclear card when his survival was at stake when Beijing and Moscow abandoned him, and groomed his son to wield smart power as a survival tool after his death.

With that said, this chapter examines the Korean War as the first of a multi-case study. As mentioned, Kim failed to achieve his aim to reunify the country during the war; however, he successfully navigated the complex set of motivations of Stalin and Mao to gain their approval for the invasion of South Korea in June 1950. When the attack culminated at the Pusan Perimeter, Kim faced defeat at the hands of General Douglas MacArthur. After the Inchon landing in September 1950, Mao felt compelled to rescue Kim due to his own threat perception of American imperialism. The war ended with an armistice,<sup>3</sup> but Kim shamelessly claimed he had defeated U.S. forces in Korea,<sup>4</sup> perhaps quibbling that a draw against the greatest military power in the world was a win for North Korea. Henry Kissinger noted the Korean War was a "draw" but acknowledged it was the first American war in which its leaders abandoned victory as their war aim. He also implied Kim earned his respect by exercising influence beyond his weight class by participating in "a three-cornered maneuver for dominance within the Communist international order [alongside Stalin and Mao], with Kim Il-sung driving up the bidding to gain support for a program of conquest whose global consequences in the end surprised all of the main participants."<sup>5</sup> Kim's propagandists continue to exploit the war as another symbol to justify his *Juche* line and related policy choices. Suzy Kim even argued, "The Korean War has become the single most defining national experience, leaving North Koreans with a fiercely autarkic mentality as a form of

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<sup>3</sup> Henry Kissinger, *World Order* (New York: Penguin Press, 2014), pp. 288-295.

<sup>4</sup> Ho Jong Ho, Kang Sok Hui and Pak Thae Ho, *The U.S Imperialists Started the Korean War* (Pyongyang, North Korea: Foreign Publishing House, 1993), p. 241.

<sup>5</sup> Kissinger, *World Order*, pp. 289-294.

internal cohesion against outside threats.”<sup>6</sup> In other words, Kim failed to reunify the country but validated a siege mentality to maintain North Korean unity against external threats and that eventually produced a new normal of “a stable state of permanent crisis.”<sup>7</sup>

Next, the study examined other North Korean provocations after the Korean War to determine what can be learned by using the smart power framework to examine the multi-cases. The study examined how Pyongyang sought opportunities to attack the U.S. (e.g., shootdown of an EC-121 in April 1969 and Panmunjom ax murders in August 1976) and to destabilize Seoul’s government (e.g., Rangoon bombing in 1983 and the KAL Flight 858 bombing in 1987) to create the conditions for reunification. While the North often failed in the execution of its provocations, it became more emboldened to use limited force to achieve its aims when the U.S.-ROK Alliance chose not to retaliate against these provocations due to its fear of escalation to full-scale war. More importantly, Pyongyang often used political and military diplomacy as well as covert and unconventional means of force to reduce the risk of escalation and to de-escalate the situation. The non-forcible return of POWs during the Korean War and the Panmunjom ax murders were the exceptions where U.S. resolve demonstrated it could influence and deter North Korean provocations with determination and willingness to risk war. With this in mind, I will briefly review Nye’s concept of smart power before proceeding with the rest of the chapter.

## **5.2 Operationalizing Smart Power Theory**

As discussed in Chapter 1, Nye argued that smart power is the “ability to combine the hard power of coercion or payment with the soft power of attraction into a successful strategy.”<sup>8</sup> That said, the method I use to illustrate how the actors employed smart power focuses on identifying the outcomes and hard and soft power actions by the actors involved, determining policy preferences of key actors, considering their power behaviors, and examining the actors’

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<sup>6</sup> Kim, *Everyday Life in the North Korean Revolution*, p. 244.

<sup>7</sup> Armstrong, “Ideological Introversion and Regime Survival,” p. 225.

<sup>8</sup> Nye, “The War on Soft Power.”

assessment of the probability of success of their actions. Next, I examine the first of five cases of provocations – the Korean War – during Kim Il-sung's rule to examine his strategy to achieve his aims from a smart power framework.

### **5.3 Setting the Conditions for Internationalizing the Korean War**

The intent is not to revisit the entire history of the Korean War, but to examine whether Kim successfully employed smart power during the key phases of the war, which included the surprise invasion, the Chinese intervention,<sup>9</sup> and the armistice agreement. I argue it is difficult to understand the history of North Korean provocations without examining its origin, the Korean War. I begin the multi-case study by highlighting the fact that after Korea was liberated from Japan, it was plausible that a leftist regime would have won without foreign interference. In other words, the social conditions in Korea favored the Communists after liberation and Kim Il-sung may have assumed peaceful reunification was possible.<sup>10</sup> However, after the Soviets and the Americans failed to reach agreement on a unified government,<sup>11</sup> the two Koreas were established as independent states in the fall of 1948, and both aimed to win the war of legitimacy and reunify the Korean Peninsula by force.<sup>12</sup>

#### **5.3.1 Kim Promotes His Southern Invasion With Stalin And Mao**

Kim Il-sung attempted to set the conditions for reunification in early 1949. According to Wada Haruki, when Stalin met with Kim and Pak Hon-yong in March 1949 they did not discuss forced reunification. However, others argued it was discussed on March 7 and Kim indicated his desire to liberate Korea by force before South Korea gained enough strength to attack the North. He argued his forces were ready for the war and would be supported by “powerful partisan units in South Korea.” Stalin was skeptical and Kim failed to convince

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<sup>9</sup> Since Kim and the KPA's role in the Korean War was limited after the Chinese intervention, the focus will be on China's decision to intervene and what the war meant for China and North Korea in their collective memory.

<sup>10</sup> Cumings, *Korea's Place in the Sun*, pp. 196-199.

<sup>11</sup> Armstrong, *The North Korean Revolution*, p. 215.

<sup>12</sup> Haruki, *The Korean War*, p. xvi.

him that he would succeed. Stalin informed Kim that his army was not superior to the South Korean army, both in quality and numbers.<sup>13</sup> Stalin also felt the U.S. would defend the South and if Stalin violated his agreement with the U.S. to partition Korea at the 38th parallel he could not prevent the U.S. intervention. Nevertheless, Stalin gave Kim hope by agreeing to train his senior military officers in the Soviet Union since none of them had formal military training. Stalin also showed his willingness to assist in the development of Kim's navy and air force as well.<sup>14</sup>

Miyoshi Jager agreed that Stalin's initial preference was to avoid a direct military confrontation with the U.S. since he believed Washington would intervene. Thus he advised Kim to wait for the South to initiate a provocation before commencing his long-awaited quest for reunification. Kim had no choice but to return to Pyongyang and bide his time but was satisfied that Stalin did not reject his plan to invade the South.<sup>15</sup> Haruki argued that in an effort to persuade Stalin to support his invasion, Kim probably oversold the strength of his forces, and may have exposed his lack of experience as a military leader. One could debate the military acumen of Kim, but what is evident is that by the time the war started on June 25, 1950, he enjoyed clear military advantages vis-à-vis the South and almost succeeded in reunifying the country. How did this occur?

As soon as Kim left Moscow, Stalin received a report from his ambassador in Pyongyang warning that the South might invade the north after U.S. troop withdrawals in May 1949. His General Staff also warned, "A larger-scale provocation was possible" from the South.<sup>16</sup> This was worrisome enough for Stalin to question the balance of power in Korea. As Hans Morgenthau noted, "The very existence of Korea as an autonomous state has been for more than two thousand years a function of the balance of power in the Far East, either in terms of the supremacy of one power that controlled and protected Korea or in terms of rival imperialisms meeting on the Korean peninsula and

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<sup>13</sup> Haruki, *The Korean War*, pp. 12-13.

<sup>14</sup> Haruki, *The Korean War*, pp. 12-13.

<sup>15</sup> Jager, *Brothers at War*, p. 55.

<sup>16</sup> Haruki, *The Korean War*, pp. 13-19.

establishing there a very unstable equilibrium for generally short duration.” China had been the dominant power in Korea with Japan periodically challenging its supremacy. In the late 1800s, Russia and Japan contested for hegemony over Korea but by the end of World War II (WW II), with Japan and China weakened, the Soviet Union and the U.S. were positioned to vie for control over Korea.<sup>17</sup> Stalin sought to maintain control over the North by securing a pro-Soviet government in Pyongyang to protect its strategic interests which included “its potential as a source of economic resources.”<sup>18</sup> Hence, he was amenable to Kim’s request for more powerful weapons to deter a South Korean invasion and received over 50 aircraft, 87 T-34 tanks, 102 SU-76 self-propelled artillery pieces, 25,000 rifles, and 7,000 pistols.<sup>19</sup>

In late April 1949, Kim sent Kim Il, another one of his Manchurian guerrillas, to China to obtain Beijing’s military assistance for the invasion. Mao cautioned the North Koreans not to invade until conditions were more favorable and indicated he would consult with Stalin before sending his troops to Korea. Mao, however, committed to sending two ethnic Korean divisions (about 20,000 total troops) stationed in Manchuria “at any time.”<sup>20</sup> He would later send about 35,000 ethnic Korean troops from three divisions from July 1949 to April 1950. This was significant since “there were only three regular divisions, one infantry brigade, and two border security brigades” in the KPA by June 1949.<sup>21</sup> As briefly mentioned above, Kim also assumed he would have support from a large number of Communist partisans in South Korea.

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<sup>17</sup> Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1967), p. 405.

<sup>18</sup> Kathryn Weatherby, “Soviet Aims in Korea and the Origins of the Korean War, 1945-1950: New Evidence from Russian Archives,” Cold War International History Project, Working Paper No. 8, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, November 1993, p. 25.

<sup>19</sup> Haruki, *The Korean War*, pp. 13-19.

<sup>20</sup> Haruki, *The Korean War*, pp. 8-19.

<sup>21</sup> Kim Donggil, “Prelude to war? The repatriation of Koreans from the Chinese PLA, 1949-50,” *Cold War History*, May 2012, Vol. 12, No. 2, pp. 236-237.

### 5.3.2 Seoul Eliminates the Communist Guerrillas in South Korea

According to the CIA in February 1949, the Communist movement in the South was nascent and was likely to weaken further. While its aim was to support the Soviet goal of absorbing the South by agitating popular sentiment against the government, conducting guerrilla operations, and fostering the narrative that “Communist domination is inevitable,” the CIA assessed that Communist strength in the South was insufficient to accomplish this aim. The report, however, acknowledged the Southern Communists were capable of receiving trained guerrilla reinforcements from Pyongyang and assisting the KPA during an invasion by conducting assassinations, sabotage, and staging rebellions within the security forces.<sup>22</sup> The CIA report also estimated that loyal Communists in the South, “those that braved various degrees of police action to assist the Communist program,” could surpass 600,000 while others associated with Communist front organizations could number about two million. They included armed Communist groups that were operating throughout the South.<sup>23</sup>

The Communist guerrilla movement on Jeju Island from 1947 to 1954 clearly demonstrated the extent of the perceived Communist threat for the South Korean government. In the end, the South Korean Army, police, and rightist youth groups killed or wounded about 25,000 to 30,000 civilians on the island as part of its counterinsurgency campaign.<sup>24</sup> What was more of a concern to Rhee (and encouraging for Kim) was that about 2,000 South Korean constabulary troops from the 14<sup>th</sup> Regiment rebelled against his government in Yosu and justified its actions by stating the troops “refused to murder the people of Cheju-do fighting against imperialist policy.” During the incident, about 1,500 rebels and 1,200 civilians and government troops were killed, respectively.<sup>25</sup> It is understandable why Kim may have been inspired by the Southern guerrilla movement and expected it to support him as he contemplated his attack on the

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<sup>22</sup> CIA Document ORE 32-48, “Communist Capabilities in South Korea,” February 21, 1949, pp. 3-11.

<sup>23</sup> CIA Document ORE 32-48, “Communist Capabilities in South Korea,” pp. 3-11.

<sup>24</sup> Kim, *The Massacres at Mt. Halla*, p. 12.

<sup>25</sup> Bruce Cumings, *Child of Conflict: The Korean-American Relationship, 1943-1953* (Seattle: University of Washington, 1983), pp. 136-144.

South. In short, his anticipation of support from the Southern Communists during the initial phase of the war was rational – “in the standard sense that given their goals, they choose the best means of achieving them”<sup>26</sup> – even though it never materialized due to brutal South Korean counterinsurgency operations.<sup>27</sup> As the South was eliminating its Communist threat, it was also fighting with the North Koreans along the border.

### **5.3.3 The Korean Border Conflict As Prelude to War**

On May 4, 1949, the Koreans fought a four-day battle near Kaesong along the 38th parallel that resulted in the death of 400 North Korean and 22 South Korean troops, respectively. North Koreans later alleged Kim Sok-won, who was commanding South Korea’s First Infantry Division, started the attack across the border.<sup>28</sup> The fighting continued along the border for six months and Kim Sok-won later informed the representatives from the United Nations Commission on Korea (UNCOK) that the two Koreas were already at war and time had come for the South to unify the country by going north.<sup>29</sup> Kim Il-sung remembered Kim Sok-won from Manchuria when they fought against each other, the former as a member of the CCP and the latter as a member of the Japanese Imperial Army.<sup>30</sup> They were blood enemies and this past still gnaws at the “Korean national consciousness.” This historical legacy is essential to understanding why, for the North Koreans, the Korean War is a continuation of the Korean civil war from Manchuria, not just because of the anti-Japanese struggle but the Korean quislings that fought for Japan<sup>31</sup> (see Appendix A for background of the founders of the South Korean army). Kim warned his old nemesis during a radio broadcast as the KPA attacked the South: “Kim Sok-

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<sup>26</sup> Ronald Wintrobe, *The Political Economy of Dictatorship* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 5.

<sup>27</sup> Kim, *The Massacres at Mt. Halla*, p. 12.

<sup>28</sup> Cumings, *The Korean War*, pp. 140-141.

<sup>29</sup> Cumings, *The Korean War*, pp. 140-141.

<sup>30</sup> Cumings, *The Korean War*, pp. 44-45.

<sup>31</sup> Cumings, *The Korean War*, pp. 44-45.



won, I'm coming to get you, you won't escape me now."<sup>32</sup> North Korea would use collaboration with the Japanese as the litmus test for everyone and knew that would make it more attractive in its war of legitimacy on the Peninsula.

In fact, Kim and Pak Hon-yong were confident that they could win a nationwide election if it were held in September 1949. On May 31, 1949, they along with Soviet General Shtykov proposed a general election to achieve peaceful reunification, which was ignored by South Korea. Waruki argued the proposal was pure propaganda, and a likely attempt to deter a South Korean invasion.<sup>33</sup> Ambassador Muccio stated in June 1949 that "it is the considered view of this Mission that neither South Korea nor North Korea, with what appear to be fairly evenly balanced military forces, is likely in the foreseeable future to assume the risks associated with a deliberate all-out invasion."<sup>34</sup> That being the case, Mao's 35,000 ethnic Korean troops began to tip the military balance in Kim's favor in July 1949 along with the large shipment of Soviet military equipment.<sup>35</sup> According to Jager, by this time Kim was convinced he could successfully reunify the country with Soviet support. Moreover, Mao was also growing more confident as he pushed for his own treaty with Stalin in December 1949. A new treaty was signed on February 14, 1950, but Mao had to provide special privileges to Stalin in Xinjiang and Manchuria before Stalin committed to aid Mao if the U.S. attacked China. Stalin still attempted to avoid war with the U.S. by demanding that a formal declaration of war had to be made.<sup>36</sup> Mao was satisfied the new treaty would help him reclaim China's proper role in the world.<sup>37</sup> As a result of Mao's growing power and influence, Stalin may have calculated that if his backing of Kim in Korea turned out well he would end up

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<sup>32</sup> Bruce Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War*, Volume II: *The Roaring of the Cataract 1947-1950* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), p. 569.

<sup>33</sup> Haruki, *The Korean War*, pp. 24-25.

<sup>34</sup> Haruki, *The Korean War*, p. 26.

<sup>35</sup> Haruki, *The Korean War*, p. 25.

<sup>36</sup> Jager, *Brothers at War*, pp. 58-60.

<sup>37</sup> Jager, *Brothers at War*, p. 60.

with a hegemonic position in Korea and use it as leverage against Mao's growing influence in Asia.<sup>38</sup>

Stalin sent over 400 of his officers, the majority of them with combat experience during WW II, to North Korea by January 1950 and "there was little doubt that the [North Korean People's Army] NKPA was better trained and equipped than its southern counterpart." Kim was now supremely confident of a quick victory.<sup>39</sup> Kim left for Moscow with Pak in late March 1950, feeling confident he was in firm control of North Korea.<sup>40</sup> Stalin may have felt the international situation had changed in Kim's favor by the spring of 1950. Mao had defeated the Nationalists in China and his forces were available to support the invasion, the Sino-Soviet security treaty would deter U.S. intervention, the U.S. domestic sentiment was against entanglement in Asia, and the Soviets had their own atomic bomb.<sup>41</sup> Kim's pestering of Stalin finally worked and Stalin approved the invasion in April 1950. According to Kissinger, Stalin apparently changed his mind during Kim's second visit to Moscow, and felt the U.S. would not intervene after Stalin and Mao had signed their treaty. With respect to Mao, Kissinger argued that he was concerned about the likelihood of U.S. intervention and was fixated on his own goal of defeating the Chinese nationalists and reclaiming Taiwan. Mao apparently believed "any project to conquer South Korea should be deferred until the completion of the Chinese Civil War through the conquest of Taiwan." However, Kim was convinced the U.S. would not tolerate two Communist victories in Asia and felt pressured to invade the South before Mao could attack Taiwan.<sup>42</sup>

On the other hand, Cumings suggested Mao may have felt an obligation to support Kim because so many Koreans had sacrificed during the Chinese revolution, the anti-Japanese struggle, and the Civil War against the Chinese

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<sup>38</sup> Kissinger, *World Order*, pp. 288-289.

<sup>39</sup> Jager, *Brothers at War*, pp. 60-61.

<sup>40</sup> Jager, *Brothers at War*, pp. 60-61.

<sup>41</sup> Kathryn Weathersby, "'Should We Fear This?' Stalin and the Danger of War with America," Working Paper No. 39, Cold War International History Project, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, July 2002, p. 9.

<sup>42</sup> Kissinger, *On China*, pp. 123-124.

nationalists.<sup>43</sup> However, Kim Dong-gil refuted Cumings by arguing that Kim did not provide any soldiers to fight in the Chinese Civil War and only about 35,000 ethnic Koreans from China were sent to North Korea by April 1950.<sup>44</sup> In the end, Kissinger agreed with Morgenthau and concluded both Mao and Stalin aimed to become the dominant power in Korea and, worst case, “keep the other partner from achieving it.” Mao then committed 50,000 ethnic Korean troops (but more likely 35,000) from the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) to Kim.<sup>45</sup>

According to Kissinger, Stalin supported the invasion because he knew he would lose the warm seaport at Dalian and a unified Korea under Kim would be more accommodating to his naval requirements. As a result, he told Kim he would support the war but frankly warned him, “If you should get kicked in the teeth, I shall not lift a finger. You have to ask Mao for all the help.” What Stalin was really saying was he sought a dominant position in Korea through Kim but, if that failed, he was going to make Mao pay to save Kim. When Mao spoke to Kim in May 1950, Kim said he had gained Stalin’s support for the invasion and he could win the war before the U.S. intervened with the help of the southern Communist guerrillas.<sup>46</sup> In his latest work, *World Order*, Kissinger emphasized that Mao’s support of Kim’s invasion of the South “delayed Chinese unification by a century” because America decided to protect Taiwan. Kissinger also suggested that Stalin intended to bog down the Americans in a “cul-de-sac” in Korea to drain their resources, and sought to do the same with Mao because he feared Mao’s rising status.<sup>47</sup> Mao also felt he was being encircled by the Soviets, who had long coveted a dominating position in Korea, and he was sensitive to playing a subservient ideological role vis-à-vis the Soviet Union.<sup>48</sup>

As the war seemed inevitable, MacArthur’s command believed the two Korean militaries were “about equal strength” in June 1950 by noting that the KPA had about 75,000 troops with an additional 20,000 border guards while

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<sup>43</sup> Cumings, *The Korean War*, p. 25.

<sup>44</sup> Kim, *Prelude to war?*, p. 236.

<sup>45</sup> Kissinger, *On China*, pp. 123-128.

<sup>46</sup> Kissinger, *On China*, pp. 123-128.

<sup>47</sup> Kissinger, *World Order*, pp. 288-289.

<sup>48</sup> Kissinger, *World Order*, pp. 288-289.

South Korea had roughly 88,000 troops. Cumings cautioned that just looking at the numbers was misleading because it failed to consider that much of the KPA had been battle-tested in the war against Japan and the Chinese Civil War.<sup>49</sup> Still others, such as Kim Dong-Choon, emphasized that the KPA had advantages other than their combat experience. While his numbers regarding the two armies were significantly higher than Cumings',<sup>50</sup> Kim Dong-Choon argued that the military capabilities of the two sides favored Pyongyang. The South possessed only 14 liaison and 10 trainer aircraft, and the North had over 210 fighter aircraft. The South had no tanks or self-propelled artillery guns, but the North possessed close to 200 tanks and 180 self-propelled artillery guns.<sup>51</sup>

In short, closer examination of Kim's plan to invade the South confirms that the countries in Northeast Asia have historical distrust of each other and that significantly influenced their calculus regarding the Korea problem.<sup>52</sup> Kim effectively manipulated this reality despite the fact the Soviets wanted to avoid World War III (WW III) with the U.S. and China sought unification with Taiwan as a top priority. As Kissinger noted, Kim clearly demonstrated his ability "to manipulate" Mao's and Stalin's "mutual suspicions" to gain their support for his invasion of the South.<sup>53</sup> It was clear Kim was earning a reputation for pulling well above his weight class as he involved the great Communist powers in his war of reunification. Next, the study examines the Chinese intervention.

#### **5.3.4 China Intervenes in Korea After the UN Intervention**

The attack began on June 25, 1950, and achieved early success. By June 27, the South Korean Army headquarters abandoned Seoul, and its

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<sup>49</sup> Cumings, *The Korean War*, p. 6.

<sup>50</sup> Kim, Dong-Choon argued the KPA had 180,000 troops and the South Korean Army had about 160,000 troops.

<sup>51</sup> Kim, Dong-Choon, *The Unending Korean War: A Social History* (Larkspur, CA: Tamal Vista Publications, 2000), pp. 42-43. In other words, Kim found sufficient evidence to question whether the South "created a favorable environment for the North to invade," in light of the evidence resulting from its suppression of the Southern communist guerrilla movement.

<sup>52</sup> Kissinger, *World Order*, pp. 288-289.

<sup>53</sup> Kissinger, *On China*, pp. 122-123.

remnants followed within the next several days.<sup>54</sup> The dire situation in Korea forced the U.S. to intervene but the prospect of mobilizing the international community through the United Nations (UN) was perceived as unlikely due to anticipated veto by the Soviets. However, Stalin informed his UN ambassador to skip the meeting and the UN approved the decision to defend South Korea on June 27, 1950. Cumings confirmed Stalin intentionally avoided the UN meeting to draw the U.S. into a strategic cul-de-sac to waste American blood and treasure, or perhaps to delegitimize the UN by portraying it as a tool of the Americans.<sup>55</sup> It also seems to confirm he wanted Mao to pay a heavy price to protect the Chinese homeland. After the surprise attack, Kim's goal of reunifying the country within a month was almost within reach, but the United Nations Command (UNC) held the line at Pusan.<sup>56</sup> As anticipated by Peng, the tide of the war turned against Kim in mid-September when MacArthur launched an amphibious landing at Inchon. This led to the "great strategic retreat" of the KPA, and the success at Inchon inspired President Harry Truman to roll back Communism by reunifying the entire peninsula.<sup>57</sup>

According to Cumings, Kim requested immediate Chinese military intervention on October 1, 1950. Mao had already informed Stalin he would intervene with about twelve divisions; however, Stalin fearing WW III reneged on his pledge to protect the Chinese coast with Soviet air power.<sup>58</sup> When UNC marched across the 38th parallel on October 9, 1950, Kim made a radio broadcast the next day to urge the KPA to "fight to the last drop of blood." He also called for the Communist guerrillas in the South to attack the enemy and appealed to his people to purge the spies and subversive elements.<sup>59</sup> As discussed below, Kim was using the war to consolidate his power just like Mao.

The CIA report on October 3, 1950, discussed the possibility of Chinese intervention in Korea. The report cited the U.S. Embassy in London conveying

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<sup>54</sup> Cumings, *The Korean War*, pp. 9-13.

<sup>55</sup> Cumings, *The Korean War*, pp. 9-13.

<sup>56</sup> Cumings, *The Korean War*, pp. 14-22.

<sup>57</sup> Cumings, *The Korean War*, pp. 14-22.

<sup>58</sup> Cumings, *The Korean War*, p. 24.

<sup>59</sup> Haruki, *The Korean War*, p. 127.

a report from the British, which indicated that Zhou Enlai had warned the Indian ambassador in Beijing that the PLA would intervene in Korea if the UNC crossed the 38th parallel. Zhou also revealed that the Chinese would not intervene if only the South Koreans crossed the line. However, the CIA questioned the reliability of K.M. Panikkar, the Indian ambassador to China, and assessed he was “being used by the Chinese Communists to plant this information in an effort to influence US and UK policy.” Moreover, the CIA argued the Chinese would not intervene overtly in Korea because it was not in their interest to fight the UNC.<sup>60</sup> This assessment ignored another CIA report from September 1, 1950, warning that the “stage has been set for some form of Chinese Communist intervention or participation in the Korean War.” The report was uncertain if the Chinese intervention would be overt or covert, but it was confident “some form of armed [Chinese] assistance to the North Koreans appears imminent.”<sup>61</sup>

When the Chinese warning to intervene in Korea was ignored by the UNC as the South Koreans attacked north on October 2, 1950, Mao decided to justify the intervention with the cry, “Resist America and aid Korea; defend our nation and guard our homeland.” It linked China’s national interest with the Korean War.<sup>62</sup> According to Jonathan Spence, Mao also used the rallying cry to launch a domestic propaganda campaign to consolidate his power in China by targeting “counterrevolutionaries and foreign spies.” More importantly, Spence characterized Mao “as instigator and manipulator of the war on Korean soil” and argued he was doing the same thing in China.<sup>63</sup> In other words, similar to Stalin, Mao was not simply being manipulated by Kim to intervene in Korea. He viewed it as an opportunity to regain China’s influence in Korea as well as a means to justify his consolidation of power, despite China’s relative weakness

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<sup>60</sup> CIA Report, “Possible Chinese Communist Intervention in Korea,” October 3, 1950, p. 1 (approved for release May 28, 2003).

<sup>61</sup> CIA Report, “Korea – North China – Japan,” September 1, 1950 (approved for release December 16, 2009).

<sup>62</sup> Li Xiaobing, Allan R. Millet, and Bin Yu, eds. and trans., *Mao’s Generals Remember Korea* (Lawrence: University of Kansas, 2001), pp. 38-42.

<sup>63</sup> Jonathan Spence, *Mao Zedong* (New York: Penguin Group, 1999), p.118.

after WW II. That said, Mao was still taking a risk and he would not have done so without Kim's attempt to seize the opportunity to reunify Korea. Mao was now committed to fighting the Americans and issued the order to "enter Korea immediately" on October 8, and chose Peng Duhuai as his commander.<sup>64</sup>



**Figure 5.1.** Resist U.S. and Support Korea to Save Neighbors and Ourselves, Chinese People Defending World Peace and Against U.S. Aggression Association, East China General Branch, 1951.  
[https://www.liveauctioneers.com/item/16983672\\_resist-us-and-support-korea-to-save-neighbors-and](https://www.liveauctioneers.com/item/16983672_resist-us-and-support-korea-to-save-neighbors-and)

The Chinese People's Volunteers (CPV) crossed the Yalu River on October 14, 1950. The intervention occurred a week earlier than planned because of the speed of the American advance into North Korea. The first phase of the intervention would consist of three reinforced Chinese field armies from the 13th Army Group (about 40,000 men) tasked to fight the 8th U.S. Army. Subsequently, more Chinese field armies crossed the Yalu, and by the first

<sup>64</sup> Li, Millet, and Yu, eds. and trans., *Mao's Generals Remember Korea*, pp. 38-42.

week of November there would be 380,000 Chinese troops in Korea. When the North Koreans abandoned their capital by mid-October,<sup>65</sup> the Chinese were responsible for defending North Korea. However, Kim wanted to save face by exercising sovereignty with the “illusion of command,” and the two sides agreed to finalize operational orders jointly but the final decision authority for all military operations belonged to General Peng, the Chinese commander. With that settled, the CPV was ready to engage the UNC by the end of October.<sup>66</sup>

The Chinese launched their attack on the UNC on November 1, 1950, and surprised MacArthur in Japan. The belated Chinese intervention did not make sense to the Americans because, in their view, the Chinese had the perfect opportunity to end the war at the Pusan Perimeter and chose not to intervene. They also assumed the Chinese feared U.S. air power that could easily destroy their massive but poorly trained armies.<sup>67</sup> Even when U.S. aerial reconnaissance reported large numbers of enemy troops “all over the countryside,” the U.S. ignored the evidence.<sup>68</sup> MacArthur seemed unfazed and anticipated “the greatest slaughter in the history of mankind.” Some speculated that the reason the U.S. IC failed to forecast the Chinese intervention was MacArthur’s domination of “the flow of intelligence,”<sup>69</sup> but success at Inchon and Truman’s own desire to roll back Communism probably played a role in the failure as well.

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<sup>65</sup> Russell Spurr, *Enter the Dragon: China’s Undeclared War Against the U.S. in Korea* (New York: Newmarket Press, 1988), pp. 127-137.

<sup>66</sup> Spurr, *Enter the Dragon*, pp. 127-137 and p. 159.

<sup>67</sup> Spurr, *Enter the Dragon*, pp. 135-137 and p. 159.

<sup>68</sup> Cumings, *The Korean War*, p. 25.

<sup>69</sup> Spurr, *Enter the Dragon*, pp. 135-137 and p. 159.





**Map 5.1:** The general movement of forces during the Korean War  
<http://photos1.blogger.com/blogger/7707/2101/1600/KoreanWarMap.0.jpg>

As shown in Map 5.1 above, when the UNC advanced to its northern most point, MacArthur realized he was wrong and confirmed the Chinese had entered the war by November 6, 1950. He claimed the UNC was facing “imminent defeat,” and when the U.S. Joint Chiefs pushed back he admitted the Chinese “of unknown strength” were slowing his advance in the east and attacking in the west. It was possible that the Chinese would force him to retreat, but by November 9 MacArthur argued he could interdict Chinese reinforcements by stopping them with his air force as they crossed the Yalu. Meanwhile, the Chinese stopped their attacks on November 6, hoping their limited attack would deter further UNC movement north by demonstrating they had committed in strength. However, the UNC launched another amphibious landing with the U.S. Army’s X Corps and, as a consequence, the Chinese committed 120,000 men against X Corps and another 180,000 men to attack the 8th U.S. Army.<sup>70</sup> By late November, six Chinese field armies were fighting with units of the 8th U.S. Army, and they would stop its northern advance, destroy the South Korean II Corps, and attempt to seal allied escape routes to the south.<sup>71</sup> During these battles, Mao’s oldest son, Mao Anying, was killed by U.S. Air Force bombing on November 24, 1950. Mao left him in Korea “as an example of duty to the Chinese people.”<sup>72</sup> He was a true volunteer and became a symbol of the Chinese commitment to North Korea as they attacked both X Corps in the east and 8th U.S. Army in the northwest.<sup>73</sup>

As the tide of the war shifted in favor of the Communists, Truman warned during a news conference on November 30, 1950, that the U.S. “might use any weapon in its arsenal to hold back the Chinese.” According to Cumings, the threat by Truman to use nuclear weapons showed why Stalin had been willing to abandon North Korea due to his fear of a global war, but Mao was ready to fight, albeit for a draw at the 38th parallel.<sup>74</sup> However, Cumings seems to be

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<sup>70</sup> Spurr, *Enter the Dragon*, pp. 158-170.

<sup>71</sup> Spurr, *Enter the Dragon*, pp. 183-201.

<sup>72</sup> Spence, *Mao Zedong*, p. 117.

<sup>73</sup> Spurr, *Enter the Dragon*, pp. 183-201.

<sup>74</sup> Cumings, *The Korean War*, p. 30.

wrong about Mao. Mao appeared undaunted by Truman's threats and he was prepared to risk it all for a complete victory in Korea.<sup>75</sup> In fact, Mao "had already declared the atomic bomb a paper tiger."<sup>76</sup> As the Chinese kept up the pressure, the UNC was prepared to evacuate Pyongyang on December 5.<sup>77</sup>



**Figure 5.2.** Guo Boxiong, vice-chairman of China's Central Military Commission, places a wreath at the tomb of Mao Anying on October 24, 2010, during the 60th anniversary of the CPV entry into the Korean War.

<http://www.network54.com/Forum/257194/thread/1288036777/last-1288182634/60th%20anniversary%20for%20China%20entered%20Korean%20War>

The Chinese and the North Koreans arrived in Pyongyang, and the newly confident Chinese would not settle for the status quo, and their hubris aimed to drive the UNC off the Peninsula.<sup>78</sup> As the Communists regained the initiative in Korea, Cumings argued that MacArthur requested delegation of authority to use nuclear weapons on December 9, 1950. He also provided a list of potential

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<sup>75</sup> Spurr, *Enter the Dragon*, pp. 220-239.

<sup>76</sup> Spence, *Mao Zedong*, p. 116.

<sup>77</sup> Spurr, *Enter the Dragon*, pp. 220-239.

<sup>78</sup> Spurr, *Enter the Dragon*, pp. 220-239.

targets that required 26 nuclear bombs, and intended to drop four of them on the Chinese and four more bombs to eliminate “critical concentrations of enemy air power.”<sup>79</sup> Despite the nuclear threat, Mao was hoping to win the war within six weeks, but General Peng was concerned about the CPV’s supply lines since they would have to make the long march toward Pusan.<sup>80</sup> As the Chinese launched their attack on New Year’s Eve, the U.S. Air Force flew about 500 sorties a day against the CPV in January 1951, bombing Pyongyang with 63 B-29s on January 3 and following with another strike on the city with 60 B-29s on January 5. The Chinese were undeterred and recaptured Seoul on January 4, but Peng stopped the advance at the 37th parallel on January 7. Peng was cautious during the advance but Kim wanted to press the attack to achieve total victory.<sup>81</sup> Peng was worried about pursuing a mechanized enemy with his peasant army and anticipated a difficult and protracted campaign.<sup>82</sup>

President Truman vowed to continue the fight against the Communists; however, Secretary of Defense George Marshall and the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) “were inclined toward US withdrawal and deployment of forces to Japan, where they expected the Soviet Union to attack.” The JCS ordered MacArthur to withdraw to Japan if he felt the Chinese were capable of forcing the UNC from the Peninsula. MacArthur offered to withdraw and defend Japan or conduct a limited attack against China proper with the Chinese Nationalists fighting in Korea and launching a separate attack on China. The JCS rejected the idea on January 9, and the UN sought to end the war fearing a global war that might include the use of nuclear weapons. Stalin proposed a truce with Mao on January 11, but Mao wanted to win the war.<sup>83</sup> Peng, however, did not share Mao’s optimism. He proposed two months of rest before the advance,

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<sup>79</sup> Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War*, Volume II, p. 750.

<sup>80</sup> Spurr, *Enter the Dragon*, pp. 249-253.

<sup>81</sup> Haruki, *The Korean War*, pp. 156-157.

<sup>82</sup> Haruki, *The Korean War*, pp. 163-164.

<sup>83</sup> Haruki, *The Korean War*, pp. 157-162.

but informed Mao that Pak Hon-yong wanted to press the attack. He finally convinced Pak they should advance with caution.<sup>84</sup>

When the UNC counterattacked from Osan to Suwon (south of Seoul) in late January 1951, it caught the Communists by surprise. It prompted Peng to contact Mao and call for a truce by suggesting that if they continued the fight their plans to equip and train the Chinese forces would be ruined. Mao ignored Peng and ordered him to launch a counterattack. Stalin acquiesced but some Chinese generals believed this was unrealistic.<sup>85</sup> Peng followed orders and, despite the lack of supplies, he prepared to counterattack on February 11, 1951. At this point, Peng reported to Mao that “Kim Il-sung had come to his senses” and no longer expected easy victories. When the Communist attack occurred, the UNC held and conducted a counterattack, forcing them to pull back. Peng returned to Beijing for a meeting with Mao and convinced him to cease the offensive. Consequently, the Chinese devised a troop rotational system for Korea with Kim’s approval. As the UNC continued its offensive, the Communists withdrew from Seoul, established their defenses north of the 38th parallel, and halted their offensive on April 21, 1951.<sup>86</sup> When MacArthur threatened to expand the war into China in March 1951 and encouraged Taiwan to open a second front in early April, Truman relieved him on April 11, 1951, and called for a negotiated settlement.<sup>87</sup>

### **5.3.5 U.S. Achieves Moral Victory at the Negotiating Table**

On July 10, 1951, the two sides met in Kaesong to discuss the agenda for the armistice talks, but it took about two weeks before the Communists were ready to begin serious negotiations by proposing to establish the DMZ along the 38th parallel.<sup>88</sup> Kim and Mao had discussed this issue before and Kim viewed accepting the current battle line as “a serious political blow” and loss of “great

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<sup>84</sup> Haruki, *The Korean War*, pp. 162-163.

<sup>85</sup> Haruki, *The Korean War*, pp. 162-165.

<sup>86</sup> Haruki, *The Korean War*, pp. 166-167.

<sup>87</sup> Haruki, *The Korean War*, pp. 169-170.

<sup>88</sup> Walter G. Hermes, *Truce Tent and Fighting Front*, Center of Military History, United States Army (Washington DC, 1992), pp. 35-40.

economic and strategic value.” Kim claimed he would rather “continue the war without Chinese aid than to make such a concession.”<sup>89</sup> Apparently Mao won the debate, and on November 27, 1951, the demarcation line along the current battle line was finally drawn on the map.<sup>90</sup> There were other issues that were ultimately resolved (withdrawal of foreign troops<sup>91</sup> and mechanism to oversee the armistice agreement) but the POW repatriation issue became the main sticking point for both sides.<sup>92</sup>

The Communists refused to accept the UNC condition for the POW exchanges.<sup>93</sup> The UNC offered to return only 70,000 of the Communist POWs in exchange for 12,000 of its own troops, while the Communists claimed the UNC held 116,000 of its troops in the South. In other words, the UNC was unwilling to forcibly return about 46,000 Communist POWs. The Communists found this unacceptable, and cited “article 118 of the 1949 convention on prisoners of war.” The relevant part of the article stated, “Prisoners of war shall be released and repatriated without delay after the cessation of active hostilities.”<sup>94</sup> This issue was difficult to resolve and the fighting resumed along the front line, but the casualty rates began to decline.<sup>95</sup>

The talks resumed in May 1952 to resolve the issue of non-forcible return of POWs, but the Communists demanded the return of roughly 110,000 prisoners. The UNC identified only 83,000 Communist prisoners who were willing to return and, as expected, the talks dragged on, reaching another

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<sup>89</sup> “Report to Soviet Ambassador to the DPRK, ‘Political Attitudes and Korean-Chinese Relations in Connection with the Armistice Talks’,” September 10, 1951, Wilson Center Digital Archive, pp. 4-5 <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/117422>. (accessed June 16, 2015).

<sup>90</sup> Hermes, *Truce Tent and Fighting Front*, pp. 110-119.

<sup>91</sup> Hermes, *Truce Tent and Fighting Front*, p. 159. The UNC accepted the following language proposed by the Communists: “In order to insure (sic) the peaceful settlement of the Korean question, the military commanders of both sides hereby recommend to the government of the countries concerned on both sides that, within three (3) months after the Armistice Agreement is signed and becomes effective, a political conference of a higher level of both sides be held by representatives appointed respectively to settle through negotiation the questions of withdrawal of all foreign forces from Korea, the peaceful settlement of the Korean question, etc.”

<sup>92</sup> Hermes, *Truce Tent and Fighting Front*, p. 159.

<sup>93</sup> Executives D, E, F, and G, Eighty-Second Congress, “Geneva Conventions for the Protection of War Victims,” Report of the Committee on Foreign Relations, June 27, 1955, p. 24.

<sup>94</sup> Executives D, E, F, and G, Eighty-Second Congress, “Geneva Conventions for the Protection of War Victims,” p. 24.

<sup>95</sup> Hermes, *Truce Tent and Fighting Front*, pp. 167-174.

impasse on August 3, 1952.<sup>96</sup> The two sides met again on September 28, and the UNC made its final pitch to return those desiring repatriation and releasing others who did not want to be returned to their home country. It then gave the Communists ten days to review the offer, and when they met again on October 8 the offer was rejected. The UNC negotiators warned they would not return until the Communists accepted the UNC proposals or offered their own alternative. In short, the UNC was done talking but faced the difficult task of exerting the right amount of military pressure to “induce” concessions without risking the resumption of war.<sup>97</sup>

As the UNC walked away from the talks, the Communists responded to UNC pressure with “political and psychological warfare.”<sup>98</sup> On November 30, 1952, the Communists accused the UNC of killing 542 of its prisoners during the months of October and November, and wounding 32 of its troops at Koje Island in late November.<sup>99</sup> According to Peter Beinart, after visiting with troops in Korea in late November 1952, Dwight Eisenhower concluded, “*Militarily, unification was a pipe dream.*” He decided to accelerate the negotiating process by threatening the Communists that he was willing to “expand the war, and perhaps even use nuclear weapons.”<sup>100</sup> The threat of escalation did not seem to achieve the desired effect. The situation worsened when South Korean soldiers attempted to break up unauthorized military drills on Pongam Island. As the melee ensued, the South Korean troops killed 85 prisoners and wounded 115 others. The UNC appeared to be on the defensive regarding the POW issue but Eisenhower was sworn in as President on January 20, 1953, and softened his line by announcing he would remove the U.S. Seventh Fleet from the Taiwan Straits on February 2, 1953.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Hermes, *Truce Tent and Fighting Front*, pp. 263-276.

<sup>97</sup> Hermes, *Truce Tent and Fighting Front*, pp. 281-282.

<sup>98</sup> Hermes, *Truce Tent and Fighting Front*, p. 401.

<sup>99</sup> Hermes, *Truce Tent and Fighting Front*, pp. 404-408.

<sup>100</sup> Peter Beinart, *The Icarus Syndrome: A History of American Hubris* (New York: HarperCollins Publisher, 2010), p. 128.

<sup>101</sup> Hermes, *Truce Tent and Fighting Front*, pp. 404-408.

As the Eisenhower administration mulled over the POW issue, a major breakthrough came after the sudden death of Stalin on March 5, 1953. The new Soviet government led by Georgi Malenkov disclosed its willingness to release nine British diplomats and missionaries held captive since the beginning of the war. On March 28, the Communists accepted the UNC offer to exchange sick and wounded POWs. This was followed on March 30 by Zhou's statement that both sides "should undertake to repatriate immediately after the cessation of hostilities all those prisoners of war in their custody who insist upon repatriation and to hand over the remaining prisoners of war to a neutral state so as to ensure a just solution to the question of their repatriation."<sup>102</sup> After 18 months at the negotiating table, the UNC had finally won "the principle of no forcible repatriation" from the Communists. This battle to protect Communist defectors had been costly for the soldiers of the UNC, but the U.S. had "kept faith with the non-repatriate prisoners and won a psychological victory." The Communists had done all they could to discredit the UNC handling of its POWs by inciting riots and rebellions at the UNC camps, but the precedence set in Korea to allow prisoners to decide their future status became an integral part of international law.<sup>103</sup>

The moral victory was costly for the UNC, whose casualties from when the negotiations started in July 1951 to November of that year, reached almost 60,000 men, including 22,000 U.S. soldiers. This was a huge sacrifice since, from the start of the war until the UNC march toward the Yalu River, the U.S. lost fewer than 28,000 men. The Communists suffered much greater losses during the four-month period after the armistice began with approximately 234,000 killed.<sup>104</sup> The South Korean government's sense of insecurity would pose the final challenge for the UNC as it prepared to take the final steps toward an armistice with the Communists. On April 5, Rhee called for his soldiers to "drive to the Yalu [River] rather than a truce along the present lines."

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<sup>102</sup> Hermes, *Truce Tent and Fighting Front*, pp. 408-413.

<sup>103</sup> Hermes, *Truce Tent and Fighting Front*, pp. 430-432.

<sup>104</sup> Belvin Alexander, *Korea: The First War We Lost* (New York: Hippocrene Books, 1986), p. 447.



Next, Rhee threatened Eisenhower that if the UNC allowed the Chinese to remain in Korea he would withdraw his forces from the UNC and seek unification alone. Eisenhower informed Rhee that the UN supported peaceful reunification of Korea, but it could not support reunification by force and urged him “not to attempt to block the armistice.”<sup>105</sup>

As the U.S. continued to engage with Rhee, it sensed that his aim was to bargain for “a security pact, to obtain more economic aid, and to make his people feel he is to have a voice in the armistice negotiations.”<sup>106</sup> Rhee finally took decisive action on June 18 by unilaterally releasing 25,000 North Korean POWs who refused to return to the North. The day before, the UNC POW camps held more than 35,000 nonrepatriate North Koreans but, after the release, the camps held only about 8,600 POWs. The UNC immediately informed the Communists but they accused the UNC of colluding with Rhee. Nonetheless, the Communists signaled their willingness to end the fighting. Rhee finally agreed to support the armistice, but refused to be a signatory to it since that would acknowledge the division of Korea.<sup>107</sup> On July 21, the UNC announced it was ready to deliver 69,000 Korean and 5,000 Chinese POWs, but it would free 14,500 Chinese and 7,800 North Koreans. The Communists delivered a total of 12,764 UNC troops, including 3,313 Americans and 8,186 Koreans. The two sides signed the armistice on July 27, 1953.<sup>108</sup> In sum, Kim was recognized for his uncanny ability to manipulate the interests of the Great Powers in the communist world to achieve his own ends, but he failed to achieve reunification during the war. The question is what does the application of smart power theory tell us about Kim and his efforts during the Korean War?

### **5.3.6 Smart Power and Beginning of the War of Reunification**

First, what were Kim’s desired outcomes and did he achieve them? It is clear Kim’s aim was to reunify the country but his strategy ultimately failed

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<sup>105</sup> Hermes, *Truce Tent and Fighting Front*, pp. 436-443.

<sup>106</sup> Hermes, *Truce Tent and Fighting Front*, pp. 445-448.

<sup>107</sup> Hermes, *Truce Tent and Fighting Front*, pp. 451-454.

<sup>108</sup> Hermes, *Truce Tent and Fighting Front*, pp. 479-490.

because he did not plan for a U.S.-led international military intervention, miscalculated the potential for a popular rebellion in the South, and failed to follow up on Chinese warnings of a U.S. amphibious landing at Inchon. After occupying Seoul, Kim was hoping for a South Korean revolution that never came and his forces failed to defeat the UNC at Pusan. Another factor was the U.S. intensification of its air power to force culmination. The Inchon landing may have been anticipated, but Kim lacked the resources simultaneously to defend it and continue the fight at Pusan. He probably chose to continue the attack at Pusan because he was so close to achieving his dream of reunification and there was no certainty of a successful landing at Inchon. Admittedly, it was a bold and risky move by MacArthur. Kim settled for the armistice when the Chinese failed to reunify the country because the cost to achieve it through force was too high. By the early 1960s, inciting a Southern revolution became a major pillar of Kim's post-Korean War strategy to reunify the country.

Second, which forms of power behavior did Kim believe was most likely to succeed? When peaceful efforts to reunify the country failed after liberation, Kim believed the only way to achieve it was with armed force. However, when he and the Chinese failed to achieve this aim, Kim focused on setting the conditions for consolidating his power in the midst of war as we have also seen in Chapter 4. Kim also attempted to use coercive military diplomacy at the negotiating table but, when the U.S. demonstrated its will to uphold the POW issue on ethical grounds, Kim and Mao acquiesced. The U.S. sacrificed 22,000 of its own men to win a moral victory at Panmunjom.

Third, what resources were available to Kim? By June 1950, Kim used his "extraordinary ability" to persuade Mao and Stalin to support his war with large number of troops and equipment, respectively. While the U.S. believed the KPA and the South Korean Army were roughly equal in strength, it overlooked the fact that many in the KPA had been battle-tested before the war and the KPA also possessed significant military capabilities. It had over 210 fighter aircraft, close to 200 tanks, and 180 self-propelled artillery guns. Although the powerful partisan units in South Korea never materialized after the

invasion, Kim appeared to be convinced that this revolutionary potential remained for him to exploit later in the war (and beyond). However, when the KPA was forced to retreat after Inchon, Kim effectively lost sovereignty over the use of force to the Chinese in late 1950 and attempted to regain it from them as they negotiated with the UNC at the negotiating table at Panmunjom.

Fourth, how did Kim view the likelihood of success for the invasion? Kim was convinced he could successfully achieve reunification within a month, but he underestimated the historical legacy of the Great Powers vying for control of the Peninsula. The war came at a time when there was no single hegemonic power in the region and it was almost inevitable Kim's efforts to bring all of Korea into the Communist camp would be contested by the U.S. and other traditional powers in the region. In the end, the major powers and the two Koreas had to settle for a divided Korea.

Fifth, what were the policy preferences of the key actors? Kim launched the invasion by finally convincing Stalin to support his war of liberation despite the risk of global war. Simultaneously, Kim also convinced Mao to guarantee his survival in case he failed to achieve unification on his own. Despite China's relative weakness and desire to regain Taiwan, Mao justified the war as a defensive war to protect the homeland and also used it to consolidate his power. On the other hand, the Americans failed to understand how a minor actor like Kim could influence the likes of Stalin and Mao, but responded quickly to the North Korean invasion to restore the status quo. After the success at Inchon, however, the U.S. tried to dominate the entire Peninsula by rolling back Communism. This was an overreach that the Chinese could not accept, but Mao would also seek to do the same by pressing for an offensive to defeat the imperialists in Korea. The U.S. would threaten to use nuclear weapons against the Communists, but the Great Powers settled for denying any of the others total domination over Korea. Since the signing of the armistice, despite a wide range of provocations on the Korean Peninsula, the bitter memories of the Korean War have kept the Great Powers and the two Koreas from resuming a

full-scale war.<sup>109</sup> Most importantly from the North Korean perspective, it formed a special relationship between China and North Korea that arguably remains a “durable friendship.”<sup>110</sup> Next, before I examine the so-called Second Korean War of the 1960s, I consider the influence of the (first) Korean War on Kim Il-sung’s nuclear ambition.

#### **5.4 The Origin of Kim’s Nuclear Ambition: The Korean War**

Natalya Bazhanova challenged the argument that Kim Il-sung began conceiving his nuclear ambitions before the late 1970s. She claimed Kim did not pursue his nuclear weapons program as a survival tool until the late 1980s when he realized his conventional forces could not catch up to those in the South. This is when Kim sought the cheapest and the most powerful deterrent – nuclear weapons. She argued that by acquiring nuclear weapons Kim would “also check those who might attempt to interfere in the internal affairs of North Korea.” They would also support the dynastic transition, distract the populace from their grievances, and enhance North Korea’s international prestige. She concluded that the most important factor was to use the nuclear weapons to blackmail the U.S. to gain concessions and aid.<sup>111</sup> I would argue that, if Kim was pursuing nuclear weapons for the cheapest deterrent and to secure independence, why wait until the late 1980s? If that was the case, he should have started when his economy began to decline in the early 1970s. The same is true if he sought international prestige and attempted to bolster his domestic position – he should have pursued it sooner.

It is more plausible that Kim (and Mao) realized their nuclear ambitions during the Korean War, when both Presidents Truman and Eisenhower (not just General MacArthur) made it clear they were willing to use nuclear weapons to

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<sup>109</sup> Beinart, *The Icarus Syndrome*, pp. 128 and 168.

<sup>110</sup> Kwon Heonik, “The Korean War and Sino-North Korean Friendship,” *The Asia-Pacific Journal*, Vol. 11, Issue 32, No. 4, August, 2013, p. 1.

<sup>111</sup> James Clay Moltz and Alexandre Y. Mansourov, eds., *The North Korean Nuclear Program: Security, Strategy, and New Perspectives from Russia* (New York: Routledge, 2000), pp. 127-137.

break the stalemate with the Communists.<sup>112</sup> Since the horrible effects of the atomic bomb were well-known after its use in Japan,<sup>113</sup> it provoked a legitimate nationalistic call for “violent resistance”<sup>114</sup> against the U.S. This probably led Kim<sup>115</sup> to secure a nuclear assistance agreement with the Soviets in 1959.<sup>116</sup> The start-up cost for this program was \$500 million dollars for the nuclear facility at Yongbyon, and over 300 North Korean scientists began training in the Soviet Union.<sup>117</sup> This level of commitment suggests Kim probably harbored his ambition for nuclear weapons soon after the Korean War. Kim’s commitment to his nuclear program was validated after Park’s coup in South Korea on May 16, 1961. Park adopted a staunchly anti-Communist position and Kim’s dream of peaceful reunification after the fall of Syngman Rhee looked farfetched.<sup>118</sup> Moreover, the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962 could also have reinforced his desire to acquire a nuclear weapon when he realized the Soviets could no longer be trusted to provide their extended nuclear deterrence.<sup>119</sup> In fact, Kim was preparing for nuclear war by December 1962.<sup>120</sup> These developments convinced Kim to intensify his “efforts to achieve self-reliance in national defense... [and] called for simultaneous development of heavy industry and defense capabilities.”<sup>121</sup> According to the Soviets, the North Koreans

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<sup>112</sup> Tirman, *The Deaths of Others*, pp. 88-91.

<sup>113</sup> Tirman, *The Deaths of Others*, p. 89.

<sup>114</sup> Ivan Arreguin-Toft, *How the Weak Win Wars, A Theory of Asymmetric Conflict* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 227.

<sup>115</sup> Masako Ikegami, “China-North Korea: Renewal of the ‘Blood Alliance’,” *Asia Pacific Bulletin*, No. 158, April 5, 2012, p. 2.

<sup>116</sup> Lankov, *The Real North Korea*, p. 147.

<sup>117</sup> Moltz and Mansourov, eds., *The North Korean Nuclear Program*, p. 17.

<sup>118</sup> Person, “The Cuban Missile Crisis and the Origins of North Korea’s Policy of Self-Reliance in National Defense,” pp. 1-4.

<sup>119</sup> Baik Bong, *Kim Il Sung: Biography*, Volume [III], pp. 327-332. The Great Line appears to be what Kim Jong Un has adopted in his promotion of a “rich and powerful” country campaign.

<sup>120</sup> Sergey Radchenko, “The History of North Korean Attitudes Toward Nuclear Weapons and Efforts to Acquire Nuclear Capability,” CWIHP e-Dossier No. 14, Cold War International History Project, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, May 17, 2005, p. 3.

<sup>121</sup> Person, “The Cuban Missile Crisis and the Origins of North Korea’s Policy of Self-Reliance in National Defense,” pp. 1-4. This policy would be revived as the *Byungjin* line by his grandson in 2013.

approached the East Germans in August 1963 trying to “obtain any kind of information about nuclear weapons and the atomic industry.”<sup>122</sup>

The Soviets claimed that by 1966 North Korea had finally moved away from military tactics and doctrine based on the Manchurian guerrilla experience and the Korean War, and had begun to study Soviet doctrine, to include “missiles and nuclear weapons, under the circumstances of both offensive and defensive struggles.” The KPA was training for nuclear warfare in 1967.<sup>123</sup> Others argued that the tipping point for weaponizing its nuclear program was probably when Pyongyang discovered Seoul was pursuing its own nuclear option in the 1970s.<sup>124</sup> In July 1975, the Hungarians claimed that when Kim visited Beijing in April “the possibility of giving certain tactical nuclear weapons [to North Korea] in order to offset the [U.S.] nuclear forces in South Korea came into consideration.”<sup>125</sup> According to the Hungarians, by February 1976 the North Koreans were claiming they possessed “nuclear warheads and carrier missiles, which are targeted on the big cities of South Korea and Japan.” They also claimed they produced them by themselves. Although the Hungarians recognized Pyongyang was attempting to catch up with Seoul (it built its first nuclear plant in 1978), they assessed its “hidden intention” was to acquire nuclear weapons. This was understandable since *The Washington Post* was claiming “South Korea already possesses the technological documentation needed for the independent production of nuclear weapons.”<sup>126</sup> In sum, evidence indicates Kim’s pursuit of nuclear weapons was highly rational and was likely conceptualized during the crucible of the Korean War, and subsequent developments reaffirmed his commitment to acquire them.

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<sup>122</sup> Radchenko, “The History of North Korean Attitudes Toward Nuclear Weapons,” p. 5.

<sup>123</sup> Radchenko, “The History of North Korean Attitudes Toward Nuclear Weapons,” pp. 8-11.

<sup>124</sup> Lankov, *The Real North Korea*, pp. 147-148.

<sup>125</sup> Radchenko, “The History of North Korean Attitudes Toward Nuclear Weapons,” p. 17.

<sup>126</sup> Radchenko, “The History of North Korean Attitudes Toward Nuclear Weapons,” pp. 20-27.

## 5.5 The Second Korean War and the Resumption of Provocations

Since the end of the Korean War, there were only two provocations<sup>127</sup> before they began to intensify in the late 1960s. The fact that Kim chose not to be confrontational after the Korean War was rational since his priority was to rebuild the country, and many observers seemed to agree the North Korean economy was on a growth trajectory as it entered the 1960s. According to Shin Jong-dae and others, the North Koreans believed the opportunity to reunify the country came after the popular overthrow of the Syngman Rhee regime on April 19, 1960. The North Korean leadership viewed this event in the South “as the first victory in the anti-American struggle in South Korea.” They also believed Pyongyang had progressed far ahead of Seoul and that contributed to the April Revolution in South Korea.<sup>128</sup> As discussed in Chapter 2, in August 1960, Kim made a radical proposal to reunify the country because he was convinced what he had created in the North would be attractive to many South Koreans. He even proposed to downsize the KPA to 100,000 or even less if the U.S. was willing to withdraw its troops from Korea.<sup>129</sup> In short, what Kim desired was stability on the Peninsula to “unite the country under his leadership.”<sup>130</sup>

Nevertheless, Mitchell Lerner argued that when the North Korean economy displayed “obvious signs of collapse” by the mid-1960s, Kim had reasons to be worried about regime stability.<sup>131</sup> According to Lerner, these failures threatened the fabric of North Korean society which “evaluated everything from within a construct that demanded economic stability and independence,” and led to visible deterioration of morale within North Korean society. This eventually manifested in challenges to Kim’s authority, and

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<sup>127</sup> Fischer, *North Korean Provocative Actions, 1950-2007*, pp. 3-4. The two provocations prior to 1968 were North Korean agents’ hijacking of a South Korean airliner in February 1958 to Pyongyang that had been en route from Pusan to Seoul. In April 1965, two North Korean MiG jet fighters “attacked and damaged” a U.S. RB-47 reconnaissance plane over the Sea of Japan, about 50 miles east of the nearest North Korean coast.

<sup>128</sup> Shin Dong-dae, Christian F. Ostermann, and James Person, “North Korean Perspectives on the Overthrow of Syngman Rhee, 1960,” North Korea International Documentation Project, E-Dossier #13, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 2011, pp. 1-2.

<sup>129</sup> *Reunification Program of the DPRK*, pp. 62-63.

<sup>130</sup> Lerner, “Mostly Propaganda in Nature,” p. 28.

<sup>131</sup> Lerner, “Mostly Propaganda in Nature,” pp. 28-31.

growing factionalism led to recurrence of purges in the mid-1960s of senior officials, such as former Minister of Foreign Trade Li Il-gyeon, former vice Chairman of the Party Central Committee Kim Chang-man, and the subsequent rise of “professional military men and other conservative reformers.” In the end, Kim did not even spare the “more militant group” within the KPA.<sup>132</sup>

As we have shown in Chapter 4, it was not so “obvious” that the North Korean economy was collapsing by the mid-1960s, but there was little doubt that Pyongyang was intensifying its military activities against the South at this time. While Kim appeared to have adopted a policy of coexistence up until the early 1960s, he unleashed the KPA along the DMZ as military incidents nearly quadrupled “from 150 in 1966 to 566 in 1967.”<sup>133</sup> Other sources cite only 80 incidents in 1966 but they jumped significantly to “784 in 1967 and 985 in 1968.”<sup>134</sup> As North Korea’s provocations intensified, South Korea retaliated by conducting their own covert raids across the DMZ and one of them on October 26, 1966, reportedly resulted in about 30 North Korean casualties.<sup>135</sup>

South Korean attacks across the DMZ were a problem for the U.S.-South Korea Alliance because these raids were conducted without General Charles Bonesteel III, Commander UNC’s approval.<sup>136</sup> By November 1966, General Bonesteel and the U.S. ambassador warned Seoul against cross border attacks, but they were aware South Koreans would continue their covert action if the KPA persisted in inflicting heavy losses on the South Koreans.<sup>137</sup> As anticipated, South Korea continued to conduct unilateral covert attacks against the North with 2,400 special purpose troops under direct control of the Minister

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<sup>132</sup> Lerner, “Mostly Propaganda in Nature,” pp. 31-32.

<sup>133</sup> Lerner, “Mostly Propaganda in Nature,” pp. 18-20.

<sup>134</sup> Han Hong-koo, *South Korea and the Vietnam War in Developmental Dictatorship and The Park Chung-Hee Era: The Shaping of Modernity in the Republic of Korea* (Paramus, NJ: Homa & Sekey Books, 2003), Lee Byeong-cheon, ed., p. 267.

<sup>135</sup> Michishita, *North Korea’s Military-Diplomatic Campaigns*, pp. 17-21.

<sup>136</sup> Michishita, *North Korea’s Military-Diplomatic Campaigns*, pp. 17-21.

<sup>137</sup> Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS), 1964-1968, Volume XXIX, Part 1, Korea, Document 98, CIA Memorandum prepared by Office of Current Intelligence of the Central Intelligence Agency and coordinated with the Office of National Estimates, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v29p1/d98> (accessed August 23, 2015).



of Defense.<sup>138</sup> On November 8, 1966, the CIA speculated that the rise in North Korean provocations was a warning to the U.S. and South Korea not to deploy additional troops to Vietnam to demonstrate Pyongyang's support to Hanoi. However, it ruled out the possibility that Pyongyang intended "to open a 'second front' in the Vietnam War."<sup>139</sup> The increased intensity of conflict resulting from North Korea's provocations gained international attention in 1968.

### **5.5.1 North Korea's Failed Raid on the Blue House**

Thirty-one North Korean commandos infiltrated through the DMZ on January 17, 1968, to assassinate South Korean President Park Chung-hee. It took them four days to get to the Presidential residence (Blue House) but an alert policeman spotted them before they could launch the assault and almost ten South Koreans and five North Korean soldiers were killed during the firefight. Only one assassin managed to elude the South Koreans after the firefight but they demanded retribution.<sup>140</sup> The interesting part of this case is that their mission might have succeeded had the commandos chosen to kill the four woodcutters who ran into them during their infiltration phase. Yet, they let them go unharmed and they promptly informed the police.<sup>141</sup>

According to Sheila Miyoshi Jager, after the failed raid on the Blue House it should have been clear to Kim that the people in the South were not "waiting for him to liberate them." For instance, on January 30, 1968, 100,000 South Korean students took to the streets to protest against Pyongyang. As Kim observed this unfold, he claimed he was "mortified" at the outcome and blamed the attack on the South Korean partisans.<sup>142</sup> In reality, Kim was not deterred by the anti-North Korean protests because he was probably convinced some groups in South Korea still had revolutionary potential. As discussed further below, Kim may have attempted to start an insurgency in the Ulchin-Samchok

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<sup>138</sup> Michishita, *North Korea's Military-Diplomatic Campaigns*, pp. 17-21.

<sup>139</sup> Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS), 1964-1968, Volume XXIX, Part 1, Korea, Document 98.

<sup>140</sup> Lerner, "Mostly Propaganda in Nature," pp. 18-20.

<sup>141</sup> Jager, *Brothers at War*, p. 372.

<sup>142</sup> Jager, *Brothers at War*, pp.371-374.

area in the fall of 1968 by sending 120 of his special troops<sup>143</sup> because he was aware of the revolutionary potential in the area. Kim may have been influenced by his experience during the Korean War when he sent approximately 1,600 of his partisans to the area during the first days of the War and “they occupied the Ulchin city offices and many nearby areas.”<sup>144</sup> Kim had taken the first preparatory step to subvert Park’s regime by establishing the Revolutionary Party for Unification to aid the Communist front organizations in 1964.<sup>145</sup> The intensity of Kim’s efforts to expand his influence in the South was evident when the South Koreans captured “2,462 North Korean agents, informants, and collaborators” in 1968.”<sup>146</sup>

According to Jager, this attempt to accelerate the liberation of the South by motivating its pro-North Korean revolutionaries failed miserably.<sup>147</sup> In fact, about two million South Koreans volunteered for the local militia (i.e., Homeland Reserve Defense Force (HRDF)) when Park called to enhance his defense posture. The U.S. feared Park might retaliate and did all it could to restrain him from attacking the North.<sup>148</sup> The Soviets also feared after the failed assassination attempt that Kim was provoking a war with the U.S. by seizing the Pueblo. On January 31, Kim reminded the Soviets that “in case of the creation of a state of war in Korea as a result of a military attack by the American imperialists, the Soviet government and the fraternal Soviet people will fight together with us against the aggressors.” Jager viewed this as an effort by Kim to “co-opt” the Soviets into another Korean War; however, by February, Leonid Brezhnev informed Kim he would not support another war and reminded him that their treaty was one of “a defensive character.”<sup>149</sup> Yet, evidence below

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<sup>143</sup> Lee, Mun-hang, *JSA-Panmunjom (1953~1994)* (Seoul, South Korea: Sohwa Publisher, 2001), p. 42.

<sup>144</sup> Haruki, *The Korean War*, p. 76.

<sup>145</sup> Mitchell B. Lerner, *The Pueblo Incident: A Spy Ship and the Failure of American Foreign Policy* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2002), p. 117.

<sup>146</sup> Daniel Bolger, “Scenes from an Unfinished War: Low-Intensity Conflict in Korea, 1966-1969,” Leavenworth Papers, No. 19, Combat Studies Institute, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, July 1991, p. 113.

<sup>147</sup> Jager, *Brothers at War*, pp. 371-373.

<sup>148</sup> Lerner, “Mostly Propaganda in Nature,” pp. 18-20.

<sup>149</sup> Jager, *Brothers at War*, pp. 374-375.

suggests Kim did not intend to start another Korean War despite the moniker of these provocations being a Second Korean War. Kim intended to use limited force to spark a revolution in South Korea to achieve reunification.

### **5.5.2 Seizure of the Pueblo and Weakening of the Alliance?**

The U.S. faced its own security dilemma on January 23, 1968, when the North Koreans captured the USS Pueblo, a U.S. spy ship collecting intelligence off the eastern coast of North Korea (i.e., violation of its sovereignty)<sup>150</sup> with 83 officers and men on board, to include two civilian technicians.<sup>151</sup> Although the crew of the Pueblo declared it was in international waters,<sup>152</sup> the North Koreans “with a limited number of naval and air assets,”<sup>153</sup> fired on the ship, resulting in one American killed and several others wounded. The ship was boarded and taken to Wonsan Harbor; its crew was held hostage for almost a year and suffered repeated “torture, abuse, and public humiliation.” Many Americans were infuriated with Pyongyang and some in the U.S. called for attacking North Korean warships, capturing its merchant ships,<sup>154</sup> and blockading and conducting air strikes on Wonsan. Still others considered encouraging the South Korean seizure of a Soviet spy ship. U.S. frustration with Pyongyang did not end there as some Americans wrote to the White House calling for dropping “the hydrogen bomb” to “end it [North Korea].”<sup>155</sup>

Senator Mendell Rivers from South Carolina also demanded the use of a nuclear weapon to completely destroy a target in North Korea, and even the cerebral U.S. Commander in Korea, General Bonesteel, reacted emotionally by issuing “a blunt nuclear ultimatum against Kim Il-sung: release the Pueblo or else.” While things appeared to spiral out of control on the Peninsula, the U.S. faced significant setbacks in Vietnam during the Tet Offensive in late January

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<sup>150</sup> Lerner, “Mostly Propaganda in Nature,” p. 20.

<sup>151</sup> Lerner, *The Pueblo Incident*, p. 44.

<sup>152</sup> Lerner, “Mostly Propaganda in Nature,” pp. 20-21.

<sup>153</sup> Michishita, *North Korea's Military-Diplomatic Campaigns*, pp. 33-47. KPA's small contingent included two patrol craft, four fast attack torpedo craft, and two MIG-21 fighters.

<sup>154</sup> Lerner, “Mostly Propaganda in Nature,” pp. 20-21.

<sup>155</sup> Bolger, *Scenes from an Unfinished War*, pp. 67-69.

1968 as North Vietnam threatened key cities in South Vietnam and the U.S. Embassy. President Lyndon Johnson assumed the capture of the Pueblo and the Tet Offensive were part of the Communists' grand strategy, but seemed to have forgotten Park was almost assassinated.<sup>156</sup>



**Map 5.2.** Map of the USS Pueblo Seizure and the EC-121 Shootdown, Richard A. Mobley, "Lessons from the Capture of the USS Pueblo and the Shootdown of a US Navy EC-121 – 1968 and 1969," *Studies in Intelligence*, Vol. 59, No. 1 (March 2015).

<sup>156</sup> Bolger, *Scenes from an Unfinished War*, pp. 67-69.

Without consulting Park, Johnson ordered Bonesteel to negotiate directly with the KPA at Panmunjom to secure the release of the crew of the *Pueblo*. At the same time, Johnson felt obliged to deploy about 600 combat aircraft from six aircraft carriers and several U.S. Air Force units along with about 35 U.S. warships. He eventually called up almost 15,000 Air Force and Naval reservists and deployed roughly 3,000 airmen to South Korea. However, while the Air Force remained committed to this show of force in Korea for sixteen months, the Navy remained fixated on the Vietnam War and considered this effort in Korea as a waste of time. Consequently, Johnson decided to de-escalate the situation by negotiating with Kim while using the show of force demonstration to deter, at least temporarily, North Korean provocations<sup>157</sup> and to buy time to address Seoul's allegation of U.S. appeasement.<sup>158</sup>

President Johnson sent Cyrus Vance to Seoul on February 10, 1968, to stabilize the situation. Soon after his arrival, Vance met with senior South Korean Army officers and quickly suspected they were ready to take revenge for the attacks on the Blue House and the *Pueblo*, and assumed Vance's visit signaled tacit U.S. approval for "the great march north." The next day, he met with President Park and made it clear the U.S. wanted to avoid war in Korea, saying no "cross-border reprisals [could occur] without President Johnson's approval." In fact, unless the North Koreans launched an all-out invasion, the U.S. would not support cross-border attacks from the South. Vance then informed Park that Washington would resolve the *Pueblo* incident through negotiations with Pyongyang, and softened the blow by promising \$100 million in military aid if Park pledged not to attack the North.<sup>159</sup> Park weighed the offer for four long days and realized he could not start a war without U.S. backing, deciding to make the best of a bad situation by taking the U.S. offer.<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> Bolger, *Scenes from an Unfinished War*, pp. 69-74.

<sup>158</sup> Lerner, "Mostly Propaganda in Nature," p. 21.

<sup>159</sup> Bolger, *Scenes from an Unfinished War*, pp. 74-75.

<sup>160</sup> Bolger, *Scenes from an Unfinished War*, p. 75.

Although Michishita argued Washington and Seoul “disagreed over how to react to North Korean actions,”<sup>161</sup> the South Koreans were fortunate that General Bonesteel worked closely with them to improve the combat readiness of the UNC by taking advantage of the crises to persuade Washington to send \$230 million to the UNC. He used the money to build a chain-link fence all along the DMZ as well as acquiring other counter-infiltration barriers and equipment to detect and neutralize North Korea’s unconventional threat. The UNC also received six UH-1D helicopters to transport a quick-reaction force just in case some of the infiltrators made it across the DMZ or were inserted by sea. These measures on land were effective, but it was trickier to defend the sea infiltration routes. However, the creation of the HDRF along with the South Korean Army’s civic-action program successfully promoted counter espionage operations. According to Bolger, “the new UNC tactics worked,” and in 1968 the North Koreans sustained “almost twice as many losses as in 1967.”<sup>162</sup>

In light of these developments, the U.S. offer may have been a godsend for Park, since by demonstrating restraint to the U.S., he reaped even more benefits than “the so-called Vietnam War bonanza.” That was a significant achievement since South Korea earned a billion dollars, obtained much-needed military aid and favorable loans, and received trade concessions from the U.S. for deploying about 320,000 troops to Vietnam from September 1964 to March 1973. More importantly, the U.S. suspended its criticism of Park’s government for its authoritarian actions and instead “began to praise his ruling capabilities.” Thus, the U.S. stopped meddling in South Korea’s domestic politics, and Park consolidated his power and became a true authoritarian dictator.<sup>163</sup> In short, Park fared well despite initial tensions with the U.S. after the Blue House incident, but Bolger argued that North Korea “gained nothing by its ambitious, unconventional campaign.”<sup>164</sup> Consequently, is it true that Kim gained nothing

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<sup>161</sup> Michishita, *North Korea’s Military-Diplomatic Campaigns*, p. 25.

<sup>162</sup> Bolger, *Scenes from an Unfinished War*, pp. 75-81.

<sup>163</sup> Han, *South Korea and the Vietnam War*, Lee Byeong-cheon, eds., pp. 248-264. He cites the beginning of the South’s participation in the Vietnam War with the deployment of a medical unit.

<sup>164</sup> Bolger, *Scenes from an Unfinished War*, p. 115.

from the Second Korean War? Why did he engage in the Second Korean War in the first place?

### 5.5.3 Considering Diversionary Theory for the Second Korean War

Mitchell Lerner argued it was more likely that Kim started the Second Korean War to find a scapegoat for the failures of *Juche* within the realm of independent economy and politics by manufacturing an external crisis to preempt potential threats to his rule (i.e., diversionary theory). In short, he argued that failure of the North Korean economy by the mid-1960s forced Kim to start the war – despite some evidence the North Korean economy was not collapsing at the time.<sup>165</sup> In fact, it was only during the North-South Red Cross talks in the early 1970s that both Koreas finally realized that Seoul had caught up to Pyongyang economically as the two delegations visited each other's capitals.<sup>166</sup> What is puzzling is that Lerner admits that “*by all accounts there was no real political danger to Kim's rule.*”<sup>167</sup> In fact, Wallace's study of diversionary theory admits that North Korea's diplomacy and military actions during the 1960s indicated “arguments against the applicability of the diversionary hypothesis (which hinges on domestic distress).”<sup>168</sup>

As a result, it is likely that Kim had no reason to apply diversionary theory to remain in power in 1968. M. Taylor Fravel's critique of diversionary theory also noted that even “weak or embattled leaders can choose from a wide range of policy options to strengthen their standing at home.” They range from more authoritarian control (which Kim did employ when necessary), to economic development (still seen as a viable option in the 1960s), to expansion of foreign cooperation (which was also a viable option). All of them appeared to be better than taking risks associated with the failure of diversionary use of force.<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> Lerner, “Mostly Propaganda in Nature,” pp. 25-33.

<sup>166</sup> Ostermann and Person, eds., *The Rise and Fall of Détente on the Korean Peninsula*, pp. 18-33.

<sup>167</sup> Lerner, “Mostly Propaganda in Nature,” p. 33.

<sup>168</sup> Wallace, “The Determinants of Conflict,” p. 118.

<sup>169</sup> M. Taylor Fravel, “The Limits of Diversion: Rethinking Internal and External Conflict,” *Security Studies*, No. 19, 2010, 19: pp. 307-339.

Another alternative (and plausible) explanation is that Kim was looking for an opportunity to reunify the country “through unconventional war.” Bolger argued the timing was right when the U.S. deployed its ground troops to Vietnam in March 1965. It would only be a matter of months before Park would deploy 46,000 of his own troops to Vietnam. Kim probably viewed this as Park overreaching by exposing himself to a two-front war, and the fact that the U.S. was also consumed with Vietnam made Park even more vulnerable.<sup>170</sup>

As noted briefly above, Kim deployed about 120 Special Forces troops to the east coast of South Korea near the villages of Ulchin and Samchok on October 30, 1968, with the mission to establish guerrilla bases in the South. His troops made their way near Ulchin to educate and to mobilize the people for guerrilla warfare, but one of the South Korean villagers escaped and reported the situation to the police. This led to the deployment of about 70,000 South Korean troops to kill or capture the North Koreans. After a manhunt lasting a couple of weeks, South Koreans killed 110 and captured 7 of the North Korean guerrillas.<sup>171</sup> The U.S. military at the time concluded that the guerrilla mission was a lost cause from the start since Pyongyang apparently did not understand the situation in the South.<sup>172</sup> While that appears to be true, Kim’s experience since the pre-Korean War period may have misled him to believe he could still create “a liberated zone in the Samchok area” during the fall of 1968.<sup>173</sup>

However, Michishita did not account for the partisan raid or seriously consider Kim’s desire for reunification as an aim of the Second Korean War. He argued Kim’s aims were gaining international prestige as a “true revolutionary in the international revolutionary movement,” obstructing U.S. intelligence collection efforts, assisting the North Vietnamese by opening a second front in Korea, consolidating his power, and possibly driving a wedge in the U.S.-ROK

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<sup>170</sup> Bolger, *Scenes from an Unfinished War*, p. 5. Unlike Han Hong-koo, Bolger accounts for South Korea’s participation in the Vietnam War by citing the deployment of South Korea’s combat units. Bruce Palmer Jr., confirmed in his book, *The 25 Year War: America’s Military Role in Vietnam*, that the first U.S. “ground troops” deployed to Vietnam in March 1965 and the decision to deploy a South Korean division was also made in March 1965. (pp. 38-40).

<sup>171</sup> Bolger, *Scenes from an Unfinished War*, pp. 86-87.

<sup>172</sup> Bolger, *Scenes from an Unfinished War*, pp. 86-87.

<sup>173</sup> Haruki, *The Korean War*, p. 32.



Alliance.”<sup>174</sup> According to Shin Jong-Dae, the North Vietnamese believed Kim hyped the tensions along the DMZ in 1967 to elicit aid from the Communist bloc, and it was an attempt to regain favor with the Chinese by fighting the Americans. In other words, Kim did little to affect the Vietnam War but used it to his advantage in Korea. The Chinese also agreed that the rise in tensions was “directed at the normalization of relations with China.” Similarly, the Romanians observed Sino-North Korea relations improved after the Second Korean War.<sup>175</sup>

According to Paul French, China began to improve relations with North Korea in April 1969, and Zhou Enlai personally made the trip to Pyongyang in 1970.<sup>176</sup> East Germans reported on March 3, 1968, that Zhou had already written to Kim to inform him “that [anti-North Korea] positions of the Mao Red Guards are not identical with those of the PRC,” and expressed China’s “willingness to send volunteers to Korea.” By January 29, 1968, small Chinese delegations had arrived to provide military assistance.<sup>177</sup> On April 23, 1968, Kim met with a senior East German delegation, discussed the situation in China, and explained that “more than one million hostile troops are facing us directly. Therefore we don’t want ourselves to end the alliance with China since it would mean we will have enemies also in our back.”<sup>178</sup> Kim could not afford to open another front as he faced the U.S. and South Korea after the provocations in January 1968. Sergey Radchenko concurred that this was an attempt by Kim to attract aid and support from the socialist camp. Kim milked the Soviet cow to survive by portraying North Korea as “the state that stood on the frontline of the struggle against American imperialism.” Radchenko argued that “Soviet

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<sup>174</sup> Michishita, *North Korea’s Military-Diplomatic Campaigns*, pp. 31-51.

<sup>175</sup> Shin Jong-dae, “New Romanian Evidence on the Blue House and the USS Pueblo Incident,” North Korea International Documentation Project, E-Dossier #5, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, March 2012, p.7.

<sup>176</sup> French, *North Korea*, p. 83.

<sup>177</sup> “On Current Relations between the DPRK and the PRC,” March 3, 1968, Wilson Center Digital Archive, p. 2, trans. Karen Riechert (accessed June 16, 2015), <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/116655>

<sup>178</sup> “Memorandum on the Visit of the Party and Government Delegation of the GDR, led by Comrade Prof. Dr. Kurt Hager, with the General Secretary of the KWP and Prime Minister of the DPRK, Comrade Kim Il Sung, on 16 April 1968, 5:00p.m. until 6:50 p.m.,” April 23, 1968, Wilson Center Digital Archive, p. 4, trans. Karen Riechert (accessed June 15, 2015), <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/116731>.

support translated over the years into more subsidies for unpredictable and unreliable North Korea” because of Soviet “strategic concerns and ideological commitments” to Pyongyang. That said, Radchenko admitted Soviet intelligence had indications that Kim might start another Korean War “with U.S forces bogged down in Vietnam,” and the Chinese were prepared to commit a million soldiers to Kim for another war.<sup>179</sup>

#### **5.5.4 The Second Korean War as a Battle of Succession?**

On the other hand, Lim Jae-cheon argued that the “Plan for the Liberation of South Korea and Unification” launched in January 1968 was envisioned by former Manchurian guerrillas Kim Chang-bong and Ho Pong-hak, the Minister of Defense and Director of the General Political Bureau of the KPA, respectively. They reportedly devised the plan to kill Park and capture the USS Pueblo on their own to oppose the rise to power as number two by Kim Il-sung’s younger brother in the mid-to-late 1960s. It may have been a bold plan to exert control over the succession process. These former guerrillas believed gaining a “political edge over Kim Young-ju after they succeeded in implementing the plan” would be a *fait accompli* for Kim to seek an alternative to his brother. Kim ultimately chose his son because his brother became seriously ill (but he lived well into the 1990s), and the two former guerrillas were purged for being “military bureaucrats.” Afterward, Kim reportedly sent his political commissars down to the regimental level in the KPA to reign in the generals in April 1969.<sup>180</sup>

When Kim Il-sung met South Korean representative Lee Hu-rak during the North-South Talks in May 1972, he apologized for the botched assassination attempt on January 21, 1968, and blamed it on “certain leftist forces within North Korea.” According to Kim Da-sool, the South Koreans were not convinced that the raid on the Blue House was instigated without Kim’s approval. However, some suspected he would not have issued an apology

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<sup>179</sup> The Soviet Union and the North Korean Seizure of the USS Pueblo: Evidence from Russian Archive, Working Paper #47, Sergey S. Radchenko (no date), Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, pp. 6-21.

<sup>180</sup> Lim, *Kim Jong Il’s Leadership of North Korea*, pp. 48-50.

unless there was “certain conflict” among the leadership. On the other hand, Lee Dong-bok was not convinced North Korea was “a divided house.” As the inter-Korean talks began in the early 1970s, Kim exercised personal control of the Party, and it was unlikely “there was any room for any element in the military to hold that kind of a different view on South Korea.”<sup>181</sup>

Bolger seems to agree with Lee Dong-bok by arguing that Kim purged the two generals and several other senior officers in charge of the Reconnaissance Bureau, KWP’s guerrilla operations, the KPA Navy, and several frontline corps in January 1969. Kim reportedly executed Ho and Kim and one of the corps commanders, and imprisoned the rest because he was displeased with the outcome of the Second Korean War. He blamed their lack of imagination for the guerrillas’ inability to win the hearts and minds of the South Korean farmers, which should have been resolved by including experienced KWP cadres in the mission. North Korea had approximately 3,000 “skilled operator-agitator[s]” who could have assisted in the training and recruitment of guerrillas. Kim blamed them for failing to develop a strategy to mobilize an insurgency in the Taebaek Mountains.<sup>182</sup> What Kim said about inciting South Koreans and the U.S. in February 1963 is quite telling:

Don’t think that everything will be over when Pak Jung Hi [Park Chung-hee] is ousted. The point is that the people [in the South] should be awakened. All young people should be awakened, and, further, “ROK army” soldiers should be awakened. They are now being awakened gradually. We must help them to wake up quickly... *The revolution in the southern half is also related in a large measure to the international situation.* A struggle against the U.S. scoundrels should take place everywhere in the world, driving them into *blind alleys*... Today the general international situation is favourable to our revolution.<sup>183</sup>

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<sup>181</sup> Ostermann and Person, eds., *The Rise and Fall of Détente on the Korean Peninsula*, pp. 10-13.

<sup>182</sup> Bolger, *Scenes from an Unfinished War*, p. 15 and pp. 86-114. Reconnaissance Bureau became part of the Reconnaissance General Bureau in 2009. See Joseph S. Bermudez, Jr., “38 North Special Report: A New Emphasis on Operations Against South Korea?,” 38 North Special Report 4, June 11, 2010, p. 3.

<sup>183</sup> Kim, *Selected Works*, Volume III, pp. 520-522.

Kim expected his partisans to awaken the people at Ulchin but they failed and he was preparing for the right moment to strike the U.S. As noted before, Bolger also believed the Second Korean conflict was a huge failure for Kim. The South Koreans supported their military, the changes that the commander of UNC had implemented since early 1968 paid off, and the South Korean military demonstrated that it was capable of dealing with “the best [soldiers] the north could offer.” Bolger concluded these failures convinced Kim that his “dream of fomenting a serious anti-ROK insurrection” was over.<sup>184</sup> Of course, Kim did not give up on this dream of reunification as shown later in the chapter.

#### **5.5.5 Alternative Explanation for the Second Korean War**

I offer another explanation for the Second Korean War and the interpretation of its outcomes. I agree with Bolger that Kim started the conflict because he finally saw an opportunity to finish what he started during the First Korean War,<sup>185</sup> but this time he aimed to achieve reunification by unconventional means. Even if Lim was correct about the succession controversy and Kim was telling the truth about the rogue leftist elements trying to kill Park without his knowledge, it does not explain why Kim continued to hold the crew of the Pueblo for almost a year and sought to develop a guerrilla base in the Ulchin-Samchok area in late 1968. If Kim did not approve of the campaign, he would have issued an apology and ended it quickly after the failed attack on the Blue House. While it is possible that the rogue generals may have challenged Kim’s selection of his brother as successor, it is also plausible that they were purged because Kim had delegated authority to them to execute the mission but they failed and Kim held them accountable.

Richard Mobley also argued that part of the reason for the purge was the failure to incite a rebellion in the South but suggested these rogue generals were criticized severely by Kim for promoting the acquisition of high-tech

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<sup>184</sup> Bolger, *Scenes from an Unfinished War*, pp. 86-114.

<sup>185</sup> Without considering the Korean War as one examines post-Korean War provocations, especially during the Kim Il-sung era, observers may misinterpret North Korea’s strategies and aims.

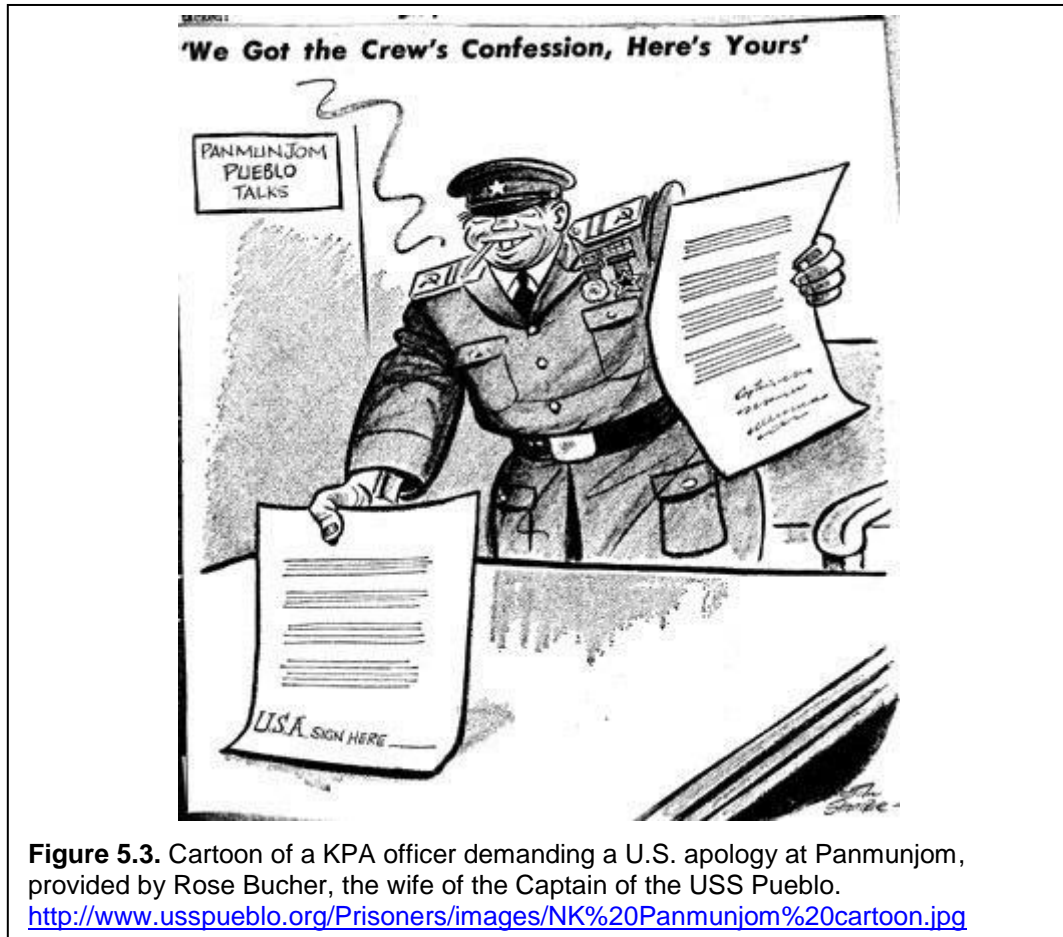
weapons that were completely unsuited for warfare in Korea. However, Mobley's argument that the purge meant "the decline of the partisan generals who fought with Kim Il-sung during World War II" lacks credibility.<sup>186</sup> Although a new group of party elites was rising to dominate the party leadership by 1970, the second largest group in the party's Central Committee remained Kim's guerrilla faction. (see Table 4.1). As a result, it is also plausible Kim may have approved the war but decided to purge only those responsible for the failures, and the purge may not have been related to the succession issue at all. Moreover, Bolger's claim that Kim gained nothing from the Second Korean conflict also seems to ignore some positive outcomes for the regime.

While the assassination attempt failed, the capture of the *Pueblo* was a propaganda boon for the North Koreans. Initially many members of the *Pueblo* crew claimed they were shocked that Pyongyang failed to exploit the "staggering" intelligence value of the crew and the ship (this was incorrect). Lerner argued that was the case because the reason for the capture of the ship was "for domestic ideological purposes rather than as part of the Cold War." Pyongyang's aim was to coerce the crew to elicit confessions of espionage for propaganda purposes and thus largely ignored external matters such as the Cold War and Soviet influence. Even the crew's scripted apologies focused almost entirely on the domestic context by emphasizing the greatness of North Korea and Kim Il-sung. According to Lerner, Pyongyang released more than 90 press reports with over 300 words regarding the *Pueblo* incident while the crew was held in captivity, and over 50 of them emphasized the need to be vigilant against U.S. espionage. These reports revealed that Pyongyang was insecure and isolated, but paradoxically it was also proud to hype *Juche* as a unique socialist system to achieve independence from outside interference. Lerner concluded that the "gains of seizing the *Pueblo* were vast, as it provided the DPRK ruler with a wealth of *Juche* at a time when it was otherwise hard to achieve." Lerner agreed with Michishita that Kim arguably raised his status in

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<sup>186</sup> Richard A. Mobley, *Flash Point North Korea: The Pueblo and EC-121 Crises* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2003), pp. 104-149.

the international community to a level that was inconceivable before the incident by confronting the U.S.<sup>187</sup> Mobley goes a step further by emphasizing that “North Korea’s one *victory* during the ‘second Korean war’ was in its handling of the Pueblo affair.”<sup>188</sup>



**Figure 5.3.** Cartoon of a KPA officer demanding a U.S. apology at Panmunjom, provided by Rose Bucher, the wife of the Captain of the USS Pueblo.  
<http://www.usspueblo.org/Prisoners/images/NK%20Panmunjom%20cartoon.jpg>

Despite calls from many in South Korea and the U.S. for military action, President Johnson’s objective was to avoid escalation since he was mindful of the war in Vietnam. Some in the U.S. Congress accused Johnson of failing to “stand up to North Korea and deplored the resulting loss of U.S. prestige.” Kim held the crew in captivity for almost a year and agreed to release the crew only after securing a written apology, which Kim knew would be retracted by the U.S.

<sup>187</sup> Lerner, *The Pueblo Incident*, pp. 118-213.

<sup>188</sup> Mobley, *Flash Point North Korea*, p. 105.

after the crew was released on December 23, 1968. The U.S. was puzzled by this at the time but years later some realized Kim did not care about the U.S. recanting its apology because he had near monopoly control of the media and most North Koreans would be unaware. Pyongyang kept the ship for its lasting propaganda value. Even if this is all North Korea took away from the Pueblo, it challenges the argument that Kim gained *nothing* from these provocations.<sup>189</sup>

Since 1967, however, John Walker, Jr., and his spy ring were working for the Soviets, and with the Pueblo's cryptologic equipment they were able to "decrypt an estimated 1 million American messages." The Soviets likely knew much about U.S. plans related to the Vietnam War and informed the North Vietnamese. As a result, it was not surprising that some U.S. commanders lamented it was almost as if "the Vietcong knew when we were coming and were waiting for us."<sup>190</sup> Moreover, a section from the National Security Agency (NSA) memorandum addressing the possibility that the Soviets may have "observed and/or tracked the USS Pueblo," from July 28, 1969, was redacted in its entirety.<sup>191</sup> This suggests there is a possibility that some evidence exists to implicate Soviet involvement as another NSA report suggested there was some evidence of Soviet jamming during the Pueblo incident.<sup>192</sup> That said, there is recent evidence that the Soviets failed to provide significant intelligence to the Vietcong after the seizure of the Pueblo.

According to Merle Pribbenow II, despite the speculation that the Walker spy ring allowed the Soviets to intercept U.S. communications, "there has never been any positive confirmation that the Soviets ever actually provided Soviet signals intelligence reports" to North Vietnam.<sup>193</sup> However, the assessed

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<sup>189</sup> Lerner, *The Pueblo Incident*, pp. 118-213.

<sup>190</sup> Lerner, *The Pueblo Incident*, pp. 118-213.

<sup>191</sup> NSA Report on the Assessment of Cryptographic Damage Resulting from the Loss of the USS Pueblo (AGER-2), July 28, 1969, approved for release by NSA on May 28, 2013, FOIA Case #63391.

<sup>192</sup> NSA classified document, Evidence of Soviet Jamming during the Pueblo Incident, approved for release by NSA on January 13, 2014, Transparency Case #63391.

<sup>193</sup> Merle L. Pribbenow II, *The Soviet-Vietnamese Intelligence Relationship during the Vietnam War: Cooperation and Conflict*, Working Paper #73, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, December 2014, p. 1.

damage to U.S. signals intelligence from the loss of the Pueblo was significant. The NSA had initially indicated that “the possibility of compromise of U.S. [communications] traffic would have been negligible.” It ignored the fact intelligence specialists from the crew “were extensively interrogated by special and apparently highly competent North Korean experts on cryptographic principles, operating procedures, and the relationship of keying materials.”<sup>194</sup> According to Jack Cheevers, one of the experts directing the interrogation was a KPA colonel who spoke fluent Russian and focused on members of the crew specializing in the intercept of Soviet signals.<sup>195</sup> The North Koreans seem to know the significance of the materials and, assuming they passed all the equipment and manuals to the Soviets, the Soviets probably penetrated “the U.S. cryptographic establishment.”<sup>196</sup>

These revelations contradict the accounts of the Pueblo crew that the North Koreans were unaware of the significance of the cryptologic materials and the men,<sup>197</sup> and suggest it is possible that the Soviets observed, tracked, and jammed the Pueblo to assist Pyongyang in the capture of the ship to take full advantage of the Walker spy ring. In fact, shortly after the Pueblo’s capture, “a North Korean aircraft flew to Moscow carrying 792 pounds of cargo, presumably the salvage from the Pueblo.” Although the Soviets claimed they were the only ones capable of exploiting this material,<sup>198</sup> the North Koreans knew exactly what they were doing. According to Vitaly Yurchenko, a KGB defector, the equipment and materials from the Pueblo, coupled with Walker’s crypto keys, netted the Soviets so much information they had to build “a special building” to process U.S. communications.<sup>199</sup> As a result, it seems plausible that the

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<sup>194</sup> NSA Report on the Assessment of Cryptographic Damage Resulting from the Loss of the USS Pueblo (AGER-2), pp. 1-2.

<sup>195</sup> Jack Cheevers, *Act of War: Lyndon Johnson, North Korea, and the Capture of the Spy Ship Pueblo* (New York: NAL Caliber, 2013), p. 320.

<sup>196</sup> NSA Report on the Assessment of Cryptographic Damage Resulting from the Loss of the USS Pueblo (AGER-2), pp. 1-2.

<sup>197</sup> Memorandum for Record, unrecognizable date, January 1968, approved for release by NSA on May 28, 2013, FOIA Case #63391.

<sup>198</sup> Lerner, *The Pueblo Incident*, p. 83.

<sup>199</sup> Cheevers, *Act of War*, pp. 320-322.



Soviets and the North Koreans began to collaborate at some point to capture the Pueblo. According to Mobley, the seizure of the Pueblo (and the EC-121 shootdown in April 1969) was not initiated by a local commander, and new pieces of evidence “suggest orchestration by the national command authority [i.e., Kim Il-sung].”<sup>200</sup> Assuming the Soviets desperately sought the crypto equipment to spy on the U.S. and the North Koreans wanted to improve their relations with the Soviets, their cooperation seems plausible. By July 1968, Pyongyang’s ties with Moscow had noticeably improved as demonstrated by the positive media coverage of the Soviets during the 7th anniversary of their treaty of friendship.<sup>201</sup> The question is, does the evidence suggest Kim exercised smart power during the Second Korean War?

#### **5.5.6 Smart Power and the Resumption of the War of Reunification**

First, what were Kim’s preferred outcomes for the Second Korean War? I argue Kim’s primary aim was not to start another Korean War because he no longer had the backing of Beijing and Moscow, but to incite a revolution by assassinating Park and sending his guerrillas to form a base for an insurgency. His aim was to agitate a select group of South Koreans at Ulchin-Samchok and envisioned this insurgency spreading across the South, but the strategy failed because the South Koreans desired democracy but not the kind Kim offered in the North (i.e., trappings of a people’s democracy). Nevertheless, Kim successfully achieved his secondary aims by initiating the limited conflict and seizing the USS Pueblo and its crew. These aims included enhancing international prestige within the Communist world, improving relations with China and the Soviet Union, and mobilizing the populace at home. He may also have attempted to drive a wedge between the U.S. and South Korea, but

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<sup>200</sup> Richard A. Mobley, “Lessons from the Capture of the USS Pueblo and the Shootdown of a US Navy EC-121 – 1968 and 1969,” *Studies in Intelligence*, Vol. 59, No. 1 (March 2015) <https://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/csi-publications/csi-studies/studies/vol-59-no-1/pdfs/Revisiting-Pueblo-and-EC121.pdf> (accessed April 3, 2015).

<sup>201</sup> Bernd Schaefer, “North Korean ‘Adventurism’ and China’s Long Shadow, 1966-1972,” North Korea International Documentation Project, Working Paper #44, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, October 2004, p. 15.

despite initial tensions between the two allies the relationship improved quickly as the U.S. offered major concessions for Seoul's demonstration of restraint. This was important since significant increases in South Korean casualties during this period convinced Park to conduct his own unilateral covert attacks against the North to deter North Korean provocations. In spite of this, the U.S. commander in Seoul worked closely with Park and helped to reassure the viability of the Alliance by strengthening the UNC's defensive posture.

Second, which forms of power behavior did Kim believe was likely to succeed during the late 1960s? Kim used hard power to incite a revolution in South Korea, and employed effective propaganda and military diplomacy to humiliate and coerce the Americans into signing a non-apology before releasing the American crew of the *Pueblo*. The successful exploitation of the *Pueblo* incident largely overshadowed the failed assassination attempt on Park. Kim's use of force may have also persuaded China to improve relations with North Korea, which was a significant accomplishment due to the worsening of their special relationship during the Chinese Cultural Revolution. Third, what resources were available to incite a revolution and to humiliate the U.S.? Unlike the First Korean War, the continuation of the Korean War in the late 1960s was an unconventional war on land with a platoon of assassins and company-sized unconventional warfare forces from the KPA, and the provocation at sea with the *USS Pueblo* was also limited with a small conventional force consisting of a joint KPA air force and navy. If the situation had escalated, Kim may have attempted to co-opt Beijing and Moscow for diplomatic and military support.

Fourth, did Kim believe he could win the Second Korean War? The risk of the provocations in 1968 was relatively low due to the limited forces involved but the potential for success was high because Kim probably assessed that both the U.S. and South Korea were overreaching in Vietnam. Moreover, his highly trained commandos almost made it to the Blue House and might have succeeded without early warning provided by the South Korean wood cutters. Even after the failed assassination attempt on Park, Kim's timing to seize the *Pueblo* was nearly perfect as it directed the spotlight away from Pyongyang to

Washington. Kim quickly regained the initiative and fully exploited the propaganda value of the Pueblo incident before releasing the crew in December 1968. He was so confident after the seizure of the Pueblo, he deployed more of his commandos to Ulchin to start an insurgency. The attempt failed but after the USS Pueblo incident was resolved, North Korean media announced that the U.S. imperialists “solemnly apologized” for their “brigandish crimes” and claimed “another great victory of the Korean people” that “crushed the myth of the mightiness of the United States imperialism to smithereens.”<sup>202</sup>

Fifth, what were the policy preferences of key actors during the crises? Kim had been tempted by the revolutionary potential in the South since before 1950 and, although it never materialized during the Korean War, he continued to see opportunities to reunify the country when the South Koreans overthrew the Syngman Rhee regime in April 1960. This gave Kim confidence that North Korea had progressed far ahead of Seoul and emboldened him to make a “radical proposal” to reunify the country. Kim truly believed what he had created in the North would be attractive to many South Koreans at the time. This was the first time Kim proposed to significantly downsize the KPA and floated the idea of U.S. troop withdrawals from Korea. However, he realized Park Chung-hee’s coup made his peaceful reunification efforts unrealistic, and when Seoul and Washington increased their commitments to Vietnam, Kim seized the opportunity to incite a revolution in the South.

The South Koreans resisted Kim’s initiatives to destabilize the South by retaliating with unilateral covert strikes across the DMZ as more of their soldiers were being killed by the KPA. Park eventually chose restraint and won a huge aid package from the U.S. In addition, Park finally won full political support from the U.S. so he could consolidate his own authoritarian rule in Seoul. Although the U.S. commander in Korea strengthened the UNC’s defensive posture, the U.S. probably gained the least from these events. Washington had to pay handsomely to reassure Seoul because it needed to avoid a two-front war in

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<sup>202</sup> Lerner, *The Pueblo Incident*, p. 219.

Asia. Washington also had to swallow its pride by offering an apology to gain the release of its men, and lost valuable intelligence and cypher equipment to the Soviets. Finally, despite the prevailing view that the Soviets were totally surprised by the Second Korean War, it is plausible that they at some point collaborated with the North to seize the Pueblo. This is pure speculation at this point since NSA has yet to fully disclose its findings of Soviet complicity in the incident. It also seems plausible that China eventually approved of Kim's actions, was prepared to offer him support, and decided to improve relations with Kim after the crises. However, the tables turned against Kim several years later at Panmunjom but, during the intervening years, U.S.-Chinese détente inspired North-South talks for the first time since the end of the Korean War.

### **5.6 North-South Talks Foster Optimism before the Ax Murders of 1976**

In mid-July 1971, Zhou visited Kim Il-sung in Pyongyang to back-brief him on the U.S.-China rapprochement and to “reaffirm its alliance with the DPRK.” Kim was led to believe the U.S. would be withdrawing from Taiwan and South Korea soon after the Vietnam War ended and, with this optimism, Kim proposed direct talks with South Korea.<sup>203</sup> However, before Zhou's arrival, Kim continued to argue for independent reunification of the Korean Peninsula. On April 12, 1971, he proposed an “8-point programme of national salvation.” The eight point program included withdrawal of U.S. troops from South Korea, significant reduction of the armed forces on both sides of the DMZ (about 100,000 each), holding democratic elections throughout both Koreas, promoting economic exchanges, and if necessary, settling for a confederation before reunification.<sup>204</sup> (see Appendix B: 8-point reunification program).

The South responded positively and the two countries' Red Cross organizations met at Panmunjom on August 20, 1971.<sup>205</sup> Kim Duk-hyun, a senior official in the KWP's OGD, represented the North and his counterpart

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<sup>203</sup> Charles K. Armstrong, *Tyranny of the Weak: North Korea and the World, 1950-1992* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013), pp. 160-161.

<sup>204</sup> *Reunification Program of the DPRK*, pp. 89-90.

<sup>205</sup> Don Oberdorfer and Robert Carlin, *The Two Koreas: A Contemporary History*, revised and updated, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (New York: Basic Books, 2014), pp. 9-11.

was Chong Hong-jin from the Korea Central Intelligence Agency (KCIA). They met more than ten times before Chong snuck out of Panmunjom on March 28, 1972, to arrange for secret talks between the two sides. In May 1972, Lee Hu-rak, Director of KCIA and a former non-commissioned officer (NCO) in the Japanese Army, made a secret trip to North Korea.<sup>206</sup> Lee's counterpart would be Kim Young-ju, the presumed successor to his older brother, and after a couple of pro forma meetings with him Lee met with the Supreme Leader.<sup>207</sup>



**Figure 5.4.** Lee Hu-rak, KCIA Chief, secretly meets with Kim in Pyongyang in May 1972. Kim's younger brother is in the background. <http://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/dprk-perspectives-korean-reunification-after-the-july-4th-joint-communiqu%C3%A9>

When they met, both agreed it was time to achieve reunification by themselves, without interference from the Great Powers. Lee conveyed the message that his colleagues in Seoul were not the “front men” of Washington and Tokyo. Kim stressed, “Our position is to oppose reliance on external forces on the issue of unification. This is where I agree with Park Chung Hee.”<sup>208</sup> Kim

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<sup>206</sup> Don Oberdorfer and Robert Carlin, *The Two Koreas*, pp. 9-19.

<sup>207</sup> Ostermann and Person, eds., *The Rise and Fall of Détente on the Korean Peninsula*, p. 94.

<sup>208</sup> Oberdorfer and Carlin, *The Two Koreas*, pp. 9-19.

also apologized for the attempt to assassinate Park in January 1968 and blamed it on “certain leftist forces,” but the South Koreans were not convinced. This admission was viewed as disingenuous since the North tried to kill Park by “planting a bomb at the National Cemetery in Seoul” on June 22, 1970.<sup>209</sup>

### **5.6.1 North-South Talks Falter Despite Optimism**

Lee tried to secure a visit to Seoul by Kim Young-ju before he left Pyongyang but Kim informed him that his younger brother was sick and could not make the trip. He would have to send another senior official to Seoul. The South Koreans hoped for the second most powerful man from the North to lead the talks, but soon realized Kim Jong-il had won the struggle to be the successor.<sup>210</sup> Consequently, Seoul accepted Kim’s representative to the talks, and it was evident that the two sides had different aims for pursuing the talks. The North sought to weaken Seoul’s ties to the U.S. (i.e., withdrawal of U.S. troops) and Japan with its charm offensive, and the South viewed it as a means to contain the growing military threat from Pyongyang by maintaining direct contact with the enemy.<sup>211</sup> Nevertheless, the two sides issued a Joint Statement on July 4, 1972, which highlighted their principles for reunification. The most important point for Kim was to achieve reunification through peaceful means and without foreign interference. Other elements of the agreement included promoting various exchanges, preventing armed incidents, establishing a North-South Coordination Commission, and “installing permanent direct telephone links between Pyongyang and Seoul.”<sup>212</sup>

Despite the progress being made, some viewed the talks as short-term tactical moves for both sides and yet for most of the international community there was “soaring optimism about the chances for a rapprochement between the two bitter enemies.” However, when the North Koreans visited Seoul during

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<sup>209</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, “Rangoon Bombing incident – The Case Against the North Koreans,” October 19, 1983, pp. 4-5. (declassified July 2000).

<sup>210</sup> Ostermann and Person, eds., *The Rise and Fall of Détente on the Korean Peninsula*, pp. 10-95.

<sup>211</sup> Oberdorfer and Carlin, *The Two Koreas*, p. 20.

<sup>212</sup> *Reunification Program of the DPRK*, p. 98.

mid-September 1972, the talks became a spectacle for one-upmanship as well as a source of “deeply felt emotions” for the Korean people, and eventually it failed as a negotiating mechanism.<sup>213</sup> On September 17, 1972, Kim complained that “south Korean authorities turned their backs and were using double-dealing tactics instead of honestly implement the agreements stipulated in the [July 4, 1972] joint statement.” His call to establish a Confederation to achieve peaceful reunification “at the earliest date,”<sup>214</sup> fell on deaf ears.

In October 1972, Park cited the talks as justification for adopting the new Yushin (i.e., revitalizing reforms) Constitution that allowed him to remain in office for another twelve years with even more executive power. He also arrested most of the political opposition and dissolved the National Assembly. Park claimed South Korea “must be strong and united to deal with the North and maintain its independence in a changing international environment.” The U.S. recognized he was trying to establish “a completely authoritarian government,” and it disassociated itself from the move, but chose not to oppose his actions. However, Washington felt compelled to intervene when the KCIA kidnapped popular opposition leader Kim Dae-jung from a Tokyo hotel in August 1973. Park probably intended to kill him but decided to place him under house arrest. Pyongyang used the incident as justification to suspend the talks; however, when the KCIA killed a prominent university professor, Park submitted to U.S. pressure and fired Lee Hu-rak. That was symbolic enough for Kim to restart the talks but at a lower level.<sup>215</sup>

Tensions continued to escalate when Mun Se-kwang, an ethnic Korean who belonged to a pro-North Korean organization in Japan (Chosen Soren in Japanese), attempted to assassinate Park Chung-hee in August 1974. His gunshot missed Park but killed the first lady during a ceremony in Seoul. Park directed his anger against Tokyo instead of Pyongyang despite the fact the latter was probably responsible for the incident. The relationship between the

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<sup>213</sup> Oberdorfer and Carlin, *The Two Koreas*, pp. 20-25.

<sup>214</sup> *Reunification Program of the DPRK*, pp. 101-102.

<sup>215</sup> Oberdorfer and Carlin, *The Two Koreas*, pp. 30-36.

two U.S. allies deteriorated so badly that the U.S. intervened to facilitate a carefully worded “letter of regret.” Mun was executed by South Korea in December 1974.<sup>216</sup> The North-South talks went on for ten more rounds from December 1973 to March 1975, but again they went nowhere.<sup>217</sup> Kim blamed it on the South Korean “authorities” and called on them to “faithfully implement the three principles –independence, peaceful reunification and great national unity– and reaffirm the July 4 Joint Statement.”<sup>218</sup>

### **5.6.2 North Korea Makes Progress on the Diplomatic Front**

Meanwhile, Kim Il-sung made the most of this time by establishing diplomatic relations with 55 countries from late 1970 to early 1975, to include five from Western Europe and many others that were purportedly non-aligned. He followed Park’s lead by revising the Constitution that formally established *Juche* as the North’s guiding ideology and put himself on par with Park by elevating his formal position from Premier to President. This was another example of the one-upmanship between them since Kim was already calling himself *Suryong*, which was a term he had only “reserved for Lenin, Stalin, and Mao before he began applying it to himself in the 1960s.” The North also reached out to the U.S., initially by inviting reporters from prominent American newspapers to Pyongyang and then contacting the U.S. Congress to elicit its help in removing U.S. troops from South Korea.<sup>219</sup> For example, Selig Harrison from *The Washington Post* “performed the role of spokespersons for North Korea” to pressure Washington and Seoul.<sup>220</sup> These alternative channels became long-term initiatives to influence the U.S., but by the spring of 1975 the success of the North Vietnamese forced Kim’s hand in dealing with South Korea.<sup>221</sup>

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<sup>216</sup> Oberdorfer and Carlin, *The Two Koreas*, pp. 42-45.

<sup>217</sup> Oberdorfer and Carlin, *The Two Koreas*, p. 36.

<sup>218</sup> *Reunification Program of the DPRK*, p. 115.

<sup>219</sup> Oberdorfer and Carlin, *The Two Koreas*, pp. 16-37.

<sup>220</sup> Ostermann and Person, eds., *The Rise and Fall of Détente on the Korean Peninsula*, p. 33.

<sup>221</sup> Ostermann and Person, eds., *The Rise and Fall of Détente on the Korean Peninsula*, p. 72.



### 5.6.3 U.S. Defeat in Vietnam Intensifies Militarization of Both Koreas

Kim visited Beijing on April 17, 1975, a couple of days after the fall of Phnom Penh and just before the U.S. lost Saigon on April 30. Some argued Kim made the trip to gain China's support to attack the South, but others suggest it is still unclear whether that is in fact what he aimed to achieve during the visit.<sup>222</sup> What is clear is that by February 1975, Kim had authorized the construction of large tunnels to facilitate a "lightning attack" on the South, and provided the U.S. and South Korea with "tangible evidence of North Korea's aggressive intentions."<sup>223</sup> Perhaps the East Germans were right to believe Kim was bold enough to float the idea of forced Korean unification before Mao died. The Chinese apparently denied the request but tried to soften the blow by offering economic aid; it reportedly fell short of Kim's expectations.<sup>224</sup>

On the other hand, Park also understood the implication of the U.S. loss in Vietnam and, when Washington failed to reassure him as the U.S. Presidential election loomed in 1976, he also pursued his own version of the *Juche* line. In fact, Park was shocked when President Richard Nixon withdrew 20,000 soldiers from South Korea in 1971 as part of his Guam Doctrine which called for U.S. allies to "assume more of the military burden."<sup>225</sup> Park made significant investments in heavy and chemical industries to lay the foundation for indigenous development of military power. The U.S. was shocked to discover Park was already hedging by cooperating with France, as early as 1972, to develop his own nuclear weapons. The U.S. initially did not intend to confront Seoul and hoped to persuade Park to abandon his nuclear weapons program with U.S. commitment to support his civilian nuclear industry. However, when Park refused to budge, Washington informed him "the entire US security relationship would be put in doubt if Seoul went through with the plan." In the

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<sup>222</sup> Ostermann and Person, eds., *The Rise and Fall of Détente on the Korean Peninsula*, p. 72.

<sup>223</sup> Oberdorfer and Carlin, *The Two Koreas*, pp. 45-47.

<sup>224</sup> Ria Chae, East German Documents on Kim Il Sung's Trip to Beijing in April 1975, North Korea International Documentation Project E-Dossier #7, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, May 2012, p. 20.

<sup>225</sup> Mark L. Clifford, "Troubled Tiger: Businessmen, Bureaucrats, and Generals in South Korea (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1994), p. 79. U.S. Army 7<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division withdrew in 1971.

end, Park abandoned his nuclear program. The U.S. sensed he would try to acquire nuclear weapons again and correctly forecasted that would entice Pyongyang to pursue its own program.<sup>226</sup> After the U.S. averted a nuclear crisis with Seoul, it faced an unexpected provocation at Panmunjom. (see Map 5.3). In light of Jimmy Carter's nomination as a Presidential candidate, Michishita speculated that Kim may have attempted the incident to coerce (but actually to co-opt) the Americans who supported the U.S. troop withdrawals to "raise their voice" to avoid "another messy and brutal war in Asia."<sup>227</sup>

#### **5.6.4 North Korea Makes the Wrong Move at Panmunjom**

According to Wayne Kirkbride, around the middle of August 1976 a UNC crew consisting of South Korean civilian workers went to trim a poplar tree in the Joint Security Area (JSA), but some of the KPA guards informed them "they would be killed if they tried," and the crew quickly returned to the UNC side of the JSA. The U.S. commander at the JSA decided to send the South Korean crew back with a security detail several days later with an experienced American officer to lead the crew.<sup>228</sup> On August 18, 1976, the work detail, comprised of five South Korean civilian workers, three UNC military officers, and seven soldiers, moved into the JSA at Panmunjom. They intended to trim the poplar tree that was located near the Bridge of No Return and was blocking the line of sight between two UNC guard posts.<sup>229</sup>

It did not take long after the workers began to trim the tree that about a dozen KPA soldiers arrived at the site. Some claimed that the KPA officer initially did not object to the work after speaking with Captain Arthur Bonifas, the senior UNC officer in charge of the tree detail, but changed his mind and ordered Bonifas to stop work on the tree.<sup>230</sup> Others argued that Lieutenant Pak, the senior KPA officer on the scene, was aware the KPA had already warned

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<sup>226</sup> Oberdorfer and Carlin, *The Two Koreas*, pp. 53-58.

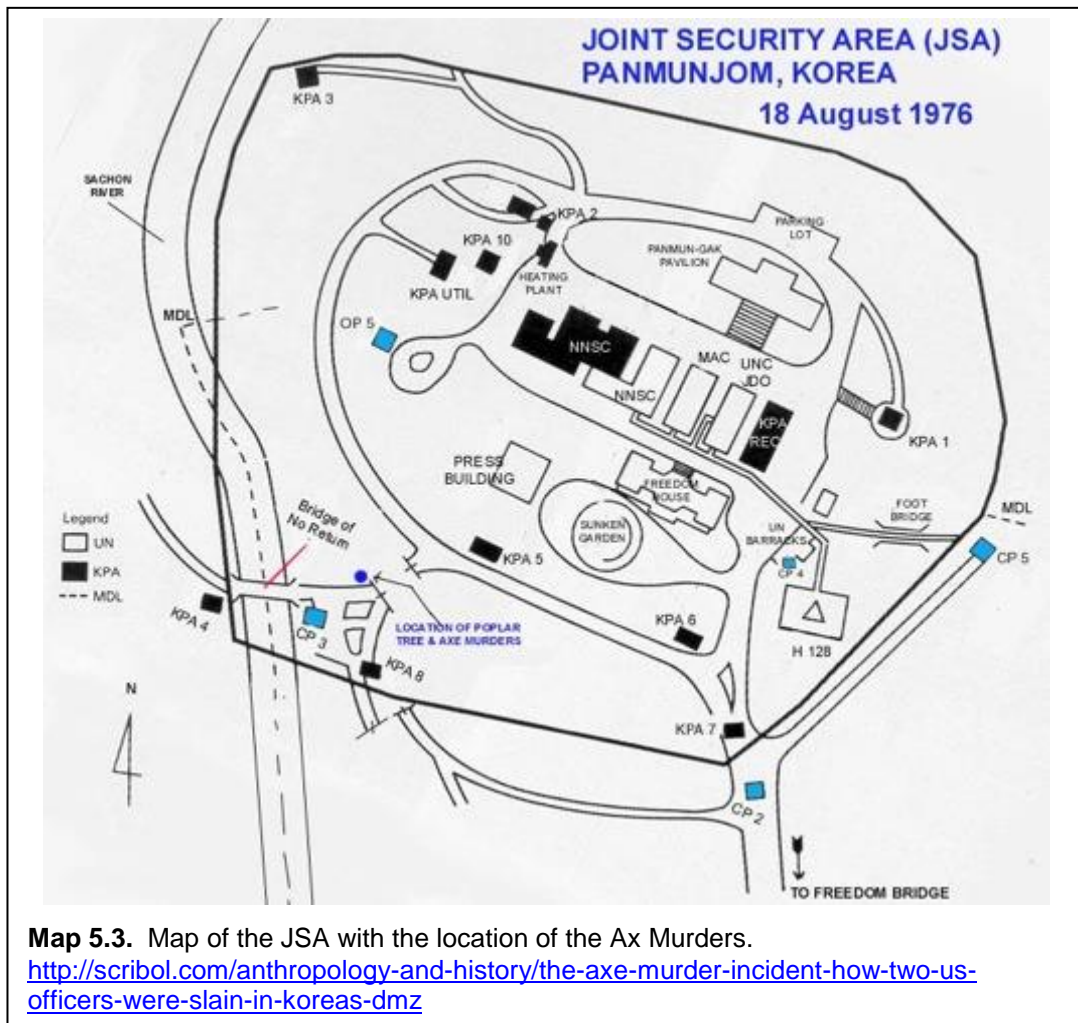
<sup>227</sup> Michishita, *North Korea's Military-Diplomatic Campaigns*, pp. 86-91.

<sup>228</sup> Wayne A. Kirkbride, *DMZ: A Story of the Panmunjom Axe Murder* (Elizabeth, NJ: Hollym, 1984), pp. 28-29.

<sup>229</sup> Downs, *Over the Line*, pp. 151-152.

<sup>230</sup> Downs, *Over the Line*, pp. 151-152.

the UNC side not to cut the tree several days earlier but they were back to cut it. This interpretation suggested the KPA attacked “knowing that the high Communist leaders would approve of any incident... and that Pyong Yang would shift the responsibility of any unprovoked attack to Seoul.” Lieutenant Pak informed Captain Bonifas that the UNC team had to cease work until “the status of the tree” could be resolved “by a security officer’s meeting.” When he was ignored, Pak threatened to kill all of the UNC crew.<sup>231</sup>



Consequently, the two sides began to argue and one of the KPA guards went back to the barracks and returned with about twenty more soldiers.

<sup>231</sup> Kirkbride, *DMZ*, pp. 29-30.

Lieutenant Pak carefully removed his watch and put it in his pocket before ordering his soldiers to “kill” as he struck Bonifas to the ground while five other KPA soldiers joined the attack on the American officer. Other KPA soldiers picked up clubs from their vehicle and went after the remaining UNC personnel. As the attack ensued, the KPA picked up axes that were abandoned by South Korean workers and used them during the attack. When the attack was over, both Captain Bonifas and First Lieutenant Mark Barrett had been killed, and “their heads were brutalized beyond recognition.” In addition to the brutal slaying of two American officers, ten more UNC soldiers were wounded.<sup>232</sup> When U.S. policymakers met in Washington “immediately after the incident,” it concluded that the incident was not a prelude to an invasion since the element of surprise had been lost. Nevertheless, UNC raised the alert status and enhanced its intelligence collection efforts. The North responded by publicly declaring its own move to prepare large segments of its society for combat.<sup>233</sup>

#### **5.6.5 U.S. Shows Resolve and Kim Il-sung Expresses Regret**

The UNC called for a Military Armistice Commission (MAC) meeting with the KPA to discuss the incident while the latter attempted to delay the meeting. General Richard Stilwell, the Commander of UNC, wrote a letter to Kim Il-sung to protest the delay and to inform him that he would be at Panmunjom (but not at the meeting) with his senior MAC representative on August 19, 1976. General Stilwell made it clear to Kim that he “expected the North Korean senior member to be there” to discuss the “unprecedented murders of the UNC joint security force.”<sup>234</sup> According to Michishita, Stilwell informed President Park that, based on the Pueblo experience, “a show force by itself would not impress the North,” and implied he was prepared to use force if necessary.<sup>235</sup>

The KPA senior member, General Han Ju-kyong, showed up on the 19th to meet his counterpart, Rear Admiral Mark Frudden, the UNC senior member.

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<sup>232</sup> Downs, *Over the Line*, pp. 151-152.

<sup>233</sup> Michishita, *North Korea's Military-Diplomatic Campaigns*, p. 75.

<sup>234</sup> Downs, *Over the Line*, p. 153.

<sup>235</sup> Michishita, *North Korea's Military-Diplomatic Campaigns*, p. 79.

RADM Frudden emphasized, “This was not the eruption of an unplanned argument. It was a *deliberate* murder of two UNC personnel who, while engaged in routine maintenance functions of a type your personnel perform, were attacked unmercifully by a numerically superior force, wielding axes and clubs.” The admiral showed Han photos of the “brutal acts” and demanded this kind of atrocity never happen again, asking him to convey the UNC commander’s protest to Kim Il-sung. Most importantly, he “warned that such belligerent acts could not be tolerated.”<sup>236</sup>

General Han initially argued the KPA acted in self-defense against “a premeditated onslaught by an overwhelming force of your side,” and claimed five of his men were wounded, some of them severely. He had the audacity to demand the UNC punish those who committed the provocations and, mimicking Admiral Frudden, requested “assurance that the UNC would not commit such provocations in the future.” General Stilwell wanted to demonstrate to the KPA that the UNC would not tolerate violations of the armistice, especially in the JSA. He ordered the tree to be cut down, and the plan included U.S. Army engineers supported by South Korean special forces and U.S. ground forces. The forces on the ground were further reinforced by “squadrons of F-111 and F-4 aircraft” deployed to South Korea as well as the aircraft carrier USS Midway and her task force afloat near Korean waters. The U.S. also had B-52 bombers on station to support the operation. On August 21, the UNC warned the KPA that there would be no violence if the UNC force was left alone to cut down the tree. Afterward, the engineers and the security elements moved in and cut down the tree without incident. In fact, large numbers of KPA guards watched from afar as the UNC work force chopped down the tree.<sup>237</sup>

The KPA called for another MAC meeting a couple of hours after the tree was cut down, and when the meeting commenced General Han stated, “It is regretful that an incident occurred in the Joint Security Area... An effort must be made so that such incidents may not recur in the future... *Our side will never*

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<sup>236</sup> Downs, *Over the Line*, p. 153.

<sup>237</sup> Downs, *Over the Line*, pp. 154-155.

*provoke first, but take self-defensive measures only when provocation occurs.*" He then asked a message to be conveyed to General Stilwell, and upon UNC confirmation that the message was delivered the meeting ended. This was perceived by the UNC as the first time that the North Koreans had issued an apology for a provocation,<sup>238</sup> but the Americans may have been unaware that Kim Il-sung had apologized to the South Koreans for the failed assassination attempt on President Park during the North-South talks.<sup>239</sup>

Nevertheless, the incident demonstrated that Pyongyang was astute enough to make a "good tactical move" by issuing an apology when its "interest would be advanced by a statement of regret." In this case, the North Koreans correctly sensed Stilwell was prepared to use force and it was in their interest to de-escalate the situation. At the next MAC meeting on August 25, the UNC side pressed for holding those responsible for the killings accountable, and the North was prepared to respond by suggesting that the two sides' security elements be separated by the MDL. This was intended to prevent future incidents in the JSA by forced separation of troops along the MDL. In short, despite the miscalculation at Panmunjom, Kim was rational enough to know when to back down. The North knew the UNC would accept its proposal to separate the two sides along the MDL since the UNC proposed it in 1970, and the KPA now embraced it as its own idea.<sup>240</sup> On August 28, the KPA also provided "all the assurances' to the safety of the U.S. personnel."<sup>241</sup>

#### **5.6.6 The Rise and Near Fall of Kim Jong-il at Panmunjom**

Michishita argued that the ax murder incident "seems to have been a premeditated, deliberate action." However, he also emphasized that "sheer chance also played a role." He mentioned the latter because the timing of the incident was determined by the UNC side and the axes used to kill the two American officers were brought to the scene by South

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<sup>238</sup> Downs, *Over the Line*, pp. 155-156.

<sup>239</sup> Ostermann and Person, eds., *The Rise and Fall of Détente on the Korean Peninsula*, p. 12.

<sup>240</sup> The Department of State Bulletin, "Department Discusses August 18 Incident at Panmunjom and Its Aftermath," Volume LXXV, No. 1944, September 27, 1976, p. 389.

<sup>241</sup> Michishita, *North Korea's Military-Diplomatic Campaigns*, p. 81.

Korean workers. He went on to suggest it was also possible that the KPA officer at the scene may have used his own initiative to conduct the attack. That said, he was convinced that, while the KPA officer had some flexibility on the execution of the attack, the “decision to attack the Americans was made by the highest political authority in North Korea.” What is surprising is that Michishita argued Kim Jong-il may have been the one who issued the order in an effort to consolidate his power.<sup>242</sup>

What this suggests is that Kim Il-sung may have been misinformed by his son about the incident. Lim Jae-cheon appears more convinced than Michishita that Kim Il-sung may not have been responsible for the incident. He also contends that by the mid-1970s Kim Jong-il “controlled every piece of information in North Korea,” and he was the “mastermind” behind the ax murders. As Michishita noted, when Kim Jong-il was informed of the Americans working on the tree at the JSA, he instructed the KPA to “stop them ‘in a certain way’,” but after it became a political crisis, both with the U.S. and at home, the KPA had to take responsibility.<sup>243</sup> What is a bit confusing is that Michishita claimed that the KPA officer responsible for the incident was “highly praised by the North Korean political leadership and was conferred a military order.”<sup>244</sup> In other words, the KPA was not punished, and suggests even if Kim Il-sung was not aware of the plan he approved of it after the incident.

Lim argued that the problem for Kim Jong-il at home was the overzealous evacuation of Pyongyang that allegedly angered Kim Il-sung. Lim concluded that if he had not been the son of the Supreme Leader “his status as the successor might have been challenged.”<sup>245</sup> This is mere speculation since he was the son of the Supreme Leader and his position as successor had been effectively secured. Kim became the head of the KWP Secretariat and a member of the Party’s Political

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<sup>242</sup> Michishita, *North Korea’s Military-Diplomatic Campaigns*, pp. 88-92.

<sup>243</sup> Lim, *Kim Jong Il’s Leadership of North Korea*, pp. 82-83.

<sup>244</sup> Michishita, *North Korea’s Military-Diplomatic Campaigns*, p. 87.

<sup>245</sup> Lim, *Kim Jong Il’s Leadership of North Korea*, pp. 82-83.

Committee in February 1974, and [un]officially became his father's successor at the Ninth Plenum of the Fifth Central Committee meeting that occurred around April 1974. While his father was reportedly reluctant to designate him as successor, his old guerrilla comrades supported the decision.<sup>246</sup>



**Figure 5.5.** In 1961, when Kim Jong-il was in his second year at Kim Il-sung University, he accompanied his father to the Taedok mountain army base to provide on-site guidance. This is reportedly the first time Kim Il-sung and his son provided on-site guidance together. It further supports the idea he was groomed for a very long time. <http://www.chinasmack.com/2011/pictures/north-korea-leader-kim-jong-il-dies-his-life-in-59-photos.html>.

According to Paul Fischer, Kim Jong-il eventually moved into an office near his father's old office in 1976 when Kim Il-sung left for his new palace,<sup>247</sup> and Daniel Tudor and James Pearson recently argued that

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<sup>246</sup> Suh Dae-Sook, "Kim Jong Il and New Leadership in North Korea," in *North Korea After Kim Il Sung*, Suh Dae-Sook and Lee Chae-Jin, eds. (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 1998), pp. 22-23.

<sup>247</sup> Fischer, *A Kim Jong-il Production*, p. 232.



Kim Jong-il subsequently “had all of his father’s telephones rerouted through his own office.” They claimed, “Whenever the leader expressed interest in a potential policy or new means of glorifying himself, Kim Jong-il showed an almost preternatural ability to anticipate his whims, and deliver on them.”<sup>248</sup> An Tai Sung claimed, “Since February 1974, Chong-il has reportedly been in charge of North Korea’s operations toward South Korea and Japan.” More importantly, rumors indicated Kim Il-sung was very ill. It was well known he had a malignant tumor by the mid-1970s and that “he made a secret visit to Rumania in late 1974 for treatment for cervical cancer.” By December 1975, Kim Il-sung was rarely seen in public and that remained true for most of 1976.<sup>249</sup> The evidence suggests it is plausible that Kim Jong-il either followed up on his father’s plan to agitate UNC forces at Panmunjom or may have planned it himself to please his father. In fact, the CIA apparently “concluded by 1976 that Kim Il-sung was no longer in charge.”<sup>250</sup> Hence, despite the failure, what does the smart power framework suggest about the Panmunjom ax murders?

### **5.6.7 Misreading U.S. Commitment and Lack of Smart Power**

First, what was the preferred outcome for the Kims for the ax murders? It seems plausible that Kim Jong-il may have attempted to provoke an incident at the JSA to consolidate his power, but it is more likely that the Kims were both looking for an opportunity to cause an incident to prompt a withdrawal of U.S. forces from Korea after U.S. defeat in the Vietnam War in 1975. As noted earlier, Kim il-sung realized after the 1960 revolution which overthrew Syngman Rhee that he could not expect reunification as long as Park remained in power and U.S.

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<sup>248</sup> Daniel Tudor and James Pearson, *North Korea Confidential: Private Markets, Fashion Trends, Prison Camps, Dissenters and Defectors* (Rutland, VT: Tuttle Publishing, 2015), pp. 92-94.

<sup>249</sup> An Tae Sung, “North Korea: From Dictatorship to Dynasty,” *Asian Affairs*, Vol. 4, No. 3 (January-February, 1977), pp. 178-180.

<sup>250</sup> Tudor and Pearson, *North Korea Confidential*, pp. 92-94.

forces were in Korea. Zhou had also informed Kim several years earlier that the U.S. would withdraw from Korea after the Vietnam War. That said, the attempt to agitate the Americans at the JSA turned the tables on the North Koreans, and drove Washington to demonstrate its commitment to Seoul and express its willingness to use force against the North for the first time since the end of the Korean War. Kim Il-sung knew the incident forced him into a corner and had to issue an apology.

Second, what type of power actions did the Kims believe would succeed at Panmunjom? It appears that the central authority, whether it was Kim Il-sung or more likely his son, approved the coercive use of force against the American officers, but at the same time the North Koreans hoped the incident would encourage some Americans to call for the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Korea. In spite (or because) of the loss in Vietnam, the U.S. responded with its own demonstration of force to achieve its aim of cutting down the tree. Third, what resources were available to the Kims to execute the assault at Panmunjom? The KPA initially had only a dozen soldiers on-site when the UNC's tree detail arrived at the poplar tree, but when the conversation between the two sides became contentious twenty more KPA soldiers arrived before they assaulted the UNC soldiers. When the melee was over, they had brutally killed two American officers. Although the timing of the incident may have been coincidental, the incident appears to be a well calculated use of force, albeit in very limited but brutal fashion.

Fourth, did the Kims believe they would be successful? Kim Jong-il probably believed this was a low-risk affair but he failed to anticipate how the situation could quickly escalate out of control. The KPA soldiers in the JSA went beyond his ambiguous instructions by seizing the opportunity to use the axes that were left by the South Korean workers. Had the KPA soldiers avoided the brutal killings, the outcomes could have been more successful since President-elect Jimmy Carter was already on course to consider the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Korea.

Fifth, what were the policy preferences of key actors regarding the ax murders? After U.S.-China rapprochement in the early 1970s, Kim believed the U.S. would be withdrawing from Taiwan and South Korea soon after the Vietnam War ended. This convinced Kim to pursue direct talks with South Korea and called for independent reunification of the Korean Peninsula. His eight point proposal included withdrawal of U.S. troops from South Korea, significant reduction of the troops on both sides of the DMZ, and a Confederation phase before reunification. However, when the North-South talks failed, both Koreas began to intensify their militarization in the wake of the Vietnam War. Kim built tunnels capable of inserting large formations of KPA troops into the South and Park began his own nuclear weapons program with the French. As noted, the North initiated the Panmunjom incident but, when the situation got out of control after the brutality of the killings was disclosed, Pyongyang initially claimed self-defense. When the commander of U.S. and UN forces clearly demonstrated his resolve to use force and Washington supported General Stilwell's proposed actions in Korea, Kim made the rational choice by offering an expression of regret, which was accepted by the U.S. as an apology. The UNC's commitment to cut down the tree despite some risk of escalation demonstrated that, with clear resolve, North Korea could be influenced to alter its behavior.

While some argued Kim Jong-il had to pay for his mistake at Panmunjom, his rise was meteoric and there was no indication his father was considering other alternatives as successor at this point. However, it could be argued that this was the incident that began the process of Kim Jong-il learning valuable lessons from making "imprudent" decisions.<sup>251</sup> He had to work on developing "the competencies and prudence necessary" to successfully manage the "complex issues" he would be required to face as the leader of North Korea. Kim Jong-il

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<sup>251</sup> Lim, *Kim Jong Il's Leadership of North Korea*, pp. 82-83.

officially became the successor at the Sixth Party Congress in October 1980.<sup>252</sup> What is not often realized is that, with respect to targeting Americans, the North Koreans honored their pledge after the ax murders: *“Our side will never provoke first, but take self-defensive measures only when provocation occurs.”* It demonstrated that if the U.S. was willing to use force, North Korea could be influenced to change its behavior. As he continued to ascend to the apex of power, Kim Jong-il would get another chance to fulfill his father’s dream of reunifying the country.

### **5.7 Another Bold Attempt to Reunify the Country in Rangoon**

On October 26, 1979, Park Chung-hee was assassinated after domestic unrest began to intensify as the South’s economy began to falter due to the global recession caused by rising oil prices. Park and his advisors were meeting to discuss how to deal with the growing opposition, and when Park favored a “harsher crackdown” his intelligence chief killed him.<sup>253</sup> The Kims probably wondered if this was finally the moment they had been waiting to reunify the country. However, Chun Doo-hwan, another army general, usurped power with a coup d’état on December 12, 1979. This led to greater instability in the South and the North most likely perceived it as another opportunity to destabilize the South, especially after Chun arrested opposition leaders Kim Young-sam and Kim Dae-jung (both later became president) and massacred student demonstrators calling for elections in Gwangju in May 1980. Moreover, the U.S. was accused of complicity in the Gwangju massacre because U.S. Ambassador William Gleysteen and General John Wickham both felt “it would be preferable to deploy the [South Korean Army’s] Twentieth Division rather than the hated special forces units, which had never been under US command.”<sup>254</sup> Kim subsequently concluded after Park’s assassination and the Gwangju massacre, the most realistic way to reunify the country was to establish “a confederal state, leaving the ideas and social systems existing in

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<sup>252</sup> Lim, *Kim Jong Il’s Leadership of North Korea*, pp. 82-83.

<sup>253</sup> Fischer, *A Kim Jong-il Production*, p. 182.

<sup>254</sup> Oberdorfer and Carlin, *The Two Koreas*, pp. 87-102.

north and south as they are.” He called the new state the “Democratic Confederal Republic of Koryo,” and suggested it should be a neutral state since it would be composed of two different political systems.<sup>255</sup> As before, the Kims could not wait for peaceful reunification, but this time, they probably knew they were running out of time to reunify the country.

### **5.7.1 Another Failed Assassination Attempt by North Korea**

On October 9, 1983, North Korea tried to assassinate Chun Doo-hwan when he was on a state visit to Burma with “the best and brightest of the South Korean government.” Almost his entire cabinet was waiting for Chun at the Burmese National Cemetery for a wreath-laying ceremony to honor the country’s founder. The South Korean delegation was unaware that North Korean commandos had prepared an ambush with a powerful bomb to kill Chun. The North Koreans had planned well but their team leader prematurely detonated the bomb when he mistook the South Korean ambassador’s car for Chun’s motorcade. The blast let loose shrapnel and other projectiles that killed many officials; “four members of the South Korean cabinet, two senior presidential advisers, and the ambassador to Burma were blown to bits.” The Burmese responded quickly and captured all three agents; one of them disclosed the detailed planning involved in the attack. This led to another anti-North Korean backlash in Seoul and Washington.<sup>256</sup>

Most South Koreans were reminded that the threat from North Korea was real and supported the hardline position toward Pyongyang after the Rangoon incident. A report in *The Korea Times* cited North Korean defectors who claimed North Korea was preparing for war. In the U.S., a Heritage Foundation study claimed that North Korea “has a decisive military edge over the ROK” and highlighted its preparedness for war. Chun Doo-hwan began to emphasize “the terrorist activities of the rogue North Korean regime,” while promoting “ideas of solidarity and appeals to the normative belief in ‘peace’.” Instead of forceful

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<sup>255</sup> *Reunification Program of the DPRK*, pp. 141-143.

<sup>256</sup> Oberdorfer and Carlin, *The Two Koreas*, pp. 110-112. CIA report on the Rangoon bombing claimed one North Korean agent was killed.

retaliation, Chun claimed he was committed to peace and dialogue despite the attempt on his life. In other words, Chun (and the South Koreans) was rational and Kim (and his rogue regime) was “unpredictable and irrational.”<sup>257</sup> The North, however, denied its involvement in the bombing.



**Figure 5.6.** The carnage after the North Korean bombing in Rangoon in 1983.  
<http://static.businessinsider.com/image/5076a10decad04102c0001a9/image.jpg>.

According to Koh Yong-hwan, a former North Korean diplomat who defected to Seoul, this was not the first time Pyongyang had planned to assassinate Chun. It planned to kill him during a state visit to Gabon in 1982, but Kim Jong-il reportedly scrapped the mission at the last minute because the incident would have spoiled Pyongyang’s reputation in Africa and this was too high a price to pay since it needed African support at the UN.<sup>258</sup> Koh appears to have a point as Armstrong confirmed that about 60% of North Korea’s trade

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<sup>257</sup> Daniel L. Chubb, *Contentious Activism & Inter-Korean Relations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), pp. 86-88.

<sup>258</sup> Oberdorfer and Carlin, *The Two Koreas*, p. 111.

agreements from 1957 to 1982 were with countries in Africa, and it had roughly 8,000 soldiers that were providing military assistance to about 40 countries from 1966 to 1983 and many of them were in Africa.<sup>259</sup> Koh also claimed that Kim Jong-il had recently assumed control of North Korea's clandestine operations and implied he was responsible for the attack.<sup>260</sup> Paul French seemed to agree by noting that, as of 1982, Kim Il-sung "went into a form of semi-retirement, increasingly transferring duties to Kim Jong-il."<sup>261</sup> That said, the preponderance of the evidence indicated that the North had done the deed but Pyongyang issued a rebuttal on October 12, stating Seoul's accusations were "preposterous and ridiculous" and declared that "we, by nature, have never undertaken an act of terrorism, nor will we". It went on to criticize Chun for inciting "North-South confrontation" and warned its forces were "on the highest alert." The claim was not convincing as Burma, a country on friendly terms with the North, publicly stated it was "virtually certain that Pyongyang authored the attack"<sup>262</sup> and "derecognized" Pyongyang.<sup>263</sup> A CIA report on October 18 also declared, "There is very strong circumstantial evidence linking North Korea to the attempted assassination of President Chun."<sup>264</sup>

The CIA argued the North Koreans had a delegation attending a similar ceremony at the cemetery in August 1983, which gave them an "excellent opportunity to survey the scene and plan an operation." Furthermore, the North Korean ship, Tonggon Aeguk-Ho, visited the port of Rangoon from September 17 to 23 to deliver Pyongyang's aid to Burma. It left the port on September 23 for Sri Lanka but the port visit was "consistent with the dispatch of an agent team." The captured equipment was "similar or identical to gear used by North Korean agents who have infiltrated South Korea." In addition to the equipment, the employment of a three-man team, the attempted suicide by agents pending

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<sup>259</sup> Armstrong, "*Juche* and North Korea's Global Aspirations," p. 17. According to Armstrong, North Korea also signed a mutual defense treaty with Libya in 1982.

<sup>260</sup> Oberdorfer and Carlin, *The Two Koreas*, p. 111.

<sup>261</sup> French, *North Korea: State of Paranoia*, p. 83.

<sup>262</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, Rangoon Bombing incident, pp. 3-5.

<sup>263</sup> Oberdorfer and Carlin, *The Two Koreas*, p. 111.

<sup>264</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, Rangoon Bombing, pp. 3-5.

capture, and maximum resistance when captured was consistent with North Korean agent operations in South Korea. It took the Burmese three days to capture or kill (one was killed) the Korean commandos as they violently resisted Burmese security forces, and “at least three Burmese were killed.”<sup>265</sup>

### **5.7.2 Chun Doo-hwan Wins U.S. Support by Showing Restraint**

Although the official narrative was about peace, when President Chun met with the remainder of his cabinet after returning from Burma his Minister of Defense Yun Song-min called for an air strike on the North. Chun, true to his word, refused to use force against Pyongyang. There were also indications that a frontline commander in the South Korean Army was calling for armed retaliation as well, and Chun had to caution his senior commanders that only he had the authority to take military action against the North. Anyone who took matters into their own hands would be guilty of disloyalty, he insisted. The situation remained tense and the U.S. Ambassador met with Chun to de-escalate tensions and reassure him. He informed Chun the U.S. knew the North Koreans were responsible for the attack but advised against retaliation. Chun showed restraint; the U.S. kept the USS Carl Vinson carrier battle group in “Korean waters” and enhanced its security posture along the DMZ. President Ronald Reagan lauded Chun during his visit to Seoul in November 1983. Reagan told him, “We and the whole world admired your restraint in the face of the provocations in Rangoon.”<sup>266</sup>

Again, the North Koreans attempted to recover quickly from the blowback resulting from the Rangoon bombing by pursuing trilateral discussions with the U.S. and South Korea “to bring peace to the peninsula.” It suggests Pyongyang may have proposed this as a hedge against mission failure in Rangoon. This was viewed as a significant change in North Korean policy to accept Seoul “as a full participant” in peace talks and it was conveyed to the U.S. by the Chinese before the bombing in September 1983. China expressed its willingness to

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<sup>265</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, Rangoon Bombing, pp. 3-5.

<sup>266</sup> Oberdorfer and Carlin, *The Two Koreas*, pp. 111-112.



cooperate with the U.S. to achieve peaceful reunification in Korea. At the same time, Deng Xiaoping warned Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger that Pyongyang had no intention to invade the South but, if the South attacked the North, “China will not be able to stay out.” However, Deng felt betrayed after the Rangoon bombing and refused to meet with Kim Jong-il ever again because Deng believed he was directly responsible for the attack. The U.S. initially responded positively to trilateral talks and Pyongyang quickly accepted, but then Seoul and Washington began to back-paddle. The U.S. called for bilateral talks between the two Koreas as a precondition for the trilateral meeting, and Seoul demanded an apology for the Rangoon bombing before the talks.<sup>267</sup> In the end, despite another failed attempt to kill a South Korean President, North Korea was not condemned by the international community as it had been after the ax murders in 1976. Why did this occur?

### **5.7.3 Failed Bombing in Rangoon to Expedite Reunification**

First, what was North Korea’s preferred outcome for the Rangoon bombing? It was likely that Kim Jong-il was responsible for directing the bombing and his aim was to seize another opportunity to destabilize the South in order to spark a revolution. Kim failed to achieve his aim due to one of his commandos detonating the bomb prematurely but Chun was forced to show restraint to gain support domestically and from the U.S. Second and third, what was the form of power behavior assessed to succeed and the resources available for the Rangoon bombing? It is clear Kim Jong-il believed that a carefully planned covert operation could have succeeded and they dispatched this limited coercive force of three commandos to kill Chun with a powerful bomb. In case it failed, they avoided places like Gabon and were prepared to accept retaliation from Burma, knowing it was likely to be temporary. Fourth, what was the probability of success? Kim had reason to believe the operation would be a success due to its careful planning and, arguably, the only reason it failed was because Chun’s motorcade was delayed, only by chance. However,

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<sup>267</sup> Oberdorfer and Carlin, *The Two Koreas*, pp. 112-114.

the trilateral talks proposal seems to suggest Kim was probably hedging and possibly intended to use it as a pretext to deny any involvement in the bombing had the commandos managed to escape. It may have worked but two of the commandos were captured and confessed to the bombing.

Fifth, what were the policy preferences of key actors regarding the bombing in Burma? Chun's coup in December 1979 and the Gwangju massacre in May 1980 probably convinced Pyongyang to seize this opportunity to pursue another revolution in South Korea. Based on its aims and various provocations since the end of the Korean War, a North Korean provocation should have been expected, and the Kims may have sensed time was running out as the South's economy began to grow almost exponentially. In spite of the Burmese and U.S. condemnation of Pyongyang for the incident, the North Korean regime denied it was responsible. Pyongyang's selection of Burma as the site to kill Chun suggests it wanted to mitigate the potential blow-back since it was a relative backwater in terms of international relations. It is also possible that Pyongyang may have attempted to dupe Beijing to support its efforts to pursue trilateral discussions with Seoul and Washington as another way to claim plausible denial had the bombing been successful.

On the other hand, some in South Korea called for military strikes against the North but Chun showed restraint, and similar to Syngman Rhee and Park Chung-hee, he gained U.S. support and legitimacy as a result. The evidence suggests that, after the Korean War, as long as American lives were not involved – unlike the Pueblo and Panmunjom ax murders – the U.S. preference was de-escalation. Deng Xiaoping was apparently disgusted that Kim Jong-il would deceive him and held Kim responsible for the attack. In the end, it was in the best interest of all concerned to forget the Rangoon bombing and return to the status quo. This may have emboldened Kim Jong-il to continue employing terrorism as a tactic to achieve his aims.

#### 5.7.4 Kim Offers Humanitarian Gesture as Anti-Americanism Grows

Kim Il-sung managed to de-escalate the situation by providing humanitarian assistance to the South during a natural disaster near Seoul that killed almost 200 people and left 200,000 more homeless in September 1984. The South accepted the aid and chose not to complain even when it discovered “some of the rice turned out wormy and the cement nearly unusable.” (see Figure 5.7). The North hailed it as a “great event, the first in the history of nearly 40 years of division.” The two sides quickly agreed to talks that would eventually lead to discussion about a summit between the leaders of the two Koreas in September 1985.<sup>268</sup>



**Figure 5.7.** North Korean aid delivered to South Korea in September 1984. Collection of Photographs: History of the Development of Inter-Korean Relations (June 14, 2004), p. 24.

By 1986, the after-effects of the Kwangju massacre and the question of U.S. complicity began to intensify anti-Americanism in Korea. When U.S.

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<sup>268</sup> Oberdorfer and Carlin, *The Two Koreas*, pp. 112-117.

Ambassador Richard Walker called student activists “spoiled brats,” and Secretary of State George Schultz lauded the Chun government for making progress toward democracy, it reinforced the idea that the U.S. was actually supporting authoritarianism in South Korea. It did not help matters when General John Wickham characterized South Koreans “as ‘lemmings’ in need of strong leadership.” As the narrative of anti-imperialism began to grow with the “radical and progressive political activist” community, the Chun government was forced to maintain the façade of pursuing “peace and unification” even if it had no intention to do so.<sup>269</sup> Under such conditions, the summit failed to materialize during Chun’s rule, but there was another opportunity for the two Koreas to improve relations as the South geared up for hosting the 1988 Olympics.

The awarding of the 1988 Olympics to Seoul in September 1981 had the potential to be an opportunity for Chun to further consolidate his power while considerably boosting South Korea’s standing in the international community. North Korea had to respond. The North could either attempt to hijack the Games by co-hosting a significant portion of the events or persuading the Soviets and others in the socialist camp to boycott the Games. Initially, it pursued a “more sophisticated policy” by proposing to co-host half of the Games and held four talks with the International Olympic Committee (IOC) from July 1985 to July 1987. However, it ended up feeling betrayed by the IOC when Juan Samaranch appeared to renege on his promise to allow Pyongyang to host three full sports (down to two). Kim was also disappointed that both Mikhail Gorbachev and Deng would not support an Olympic boycott.<sup>270</sup>

The Soviets needed the Olympics to promote cooperation with the international community and the Chinese needed Seoul to help them develop their economy. Seoul quickly sensed both China and the Soviet Union would not allow Kim to attack the South and adopted a hardline policy toward the North along with the IOC. Seoul and the IOC collaborated to isolate Pyongyang

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<sup>269</sup> Chubb, *Contentious Activism & Inter-Korean Relations*, pp. 104-105.

<sup>270</sup> Sergey Radchenko, “Sport and Politics on the Korean Peninsula: North Korea and the 1988 Seoul Olympics,” North Korea International Documentation Project E-Dossier #3, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, December 2011, pp. 1-12.

and make it known to the entire world that South Korea was winning the competition for legitimacy on the Korean peninsula. The North Koreans walked away from the talks and felt abandoned by their allies, believing they had received unequal treatment during the negotiations with the IOC. Sergey Radchenko viewed this outcome as a lost opportunity to improve relations between the two Koreas and to promote greater opening of North Korea. In pursuit of short-term gains, the South wanted to bask in the glory of a successful Olympic Games and humiliate the North Koreans. It is plausible this approach had a part in convincing the North Koreans to threaten the Games.<sup>271</sup>

### **5.8 Bombing of KAL Flight 858 to Spoil the 1988 Seoul Olympics**

On October 7, 1987, two North Korean intelligence agents reported to the Foreign Intelligence Building to meet their Director of Foreign Intelligence.<sup>272</sup> The CIA suspected this was the headquarters of the North Korean Investigation Department, which was the KWP's organ responsible for foreign intelligence activities.<sup>273</sup> The Director informed the two agents their mission was to "destroy a South Korean airplane." He underscored the seriousness of the mission by highlighting that the mission was Kim Jong-il's idea and he personally wrote the order by hand. The Director tried to inspire the two agents by suggesting North Korea's "national destiny will depend on it." He provided the rationale for the mission by emphasizing that South Korea's political situation was "more volatile than at any time since the War of Liberation [Korean War]," as its government revised the Constitution and was preparing for an election. The bombing of the plane would cause "chaos" and convince other countries to avoid the Seoul Olympics due to growing fears of terrorism. Pyongyang envisioned the bombing forcing the cancellation of the Games and that, coupled with the

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<sup>271</sup> Radchenko, "Sport and Politics on the Korean Peninsula," pp. 1-12.

<sup>272</sup> Kim, *The Tears of My Soul*, p. 82.

<sup>273</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, "North Korea: Responsibility for the Korean Airliner Bombing," *Terrorism Review*, February 11, 1988, p. 1.

worsening political climate in Seoul, could present another opportunity for reunification.<sup>274</sup>



**Figure 5.8.** Mass uprising in South Korea in June 1987.  
<http://physics.snu.ac.kr/hmin/pictures/pictures-democracy.html>.

The Director of Foreign Intelligence reminded the two agents that Korean reunification “is the great goal of our generation.”<sup>275</sup> The two agents took the following oath of loyalty before departure:

*The socialist revolution in South Korea is imminent, and our enemies have reached their most desperate hours. As we embark upon our mission, we vow the following: While we are undertaking the mission, we shall never forget the trust that the Party has placed in us and its concern on our behalves. We pledge that we will follow the Revolutionary Rules and that we will fully cooperate with each other to accomplish our mission. We*

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<sup>274</sup> Kim, *The Tears of My Soul*, pp. 83-84.

<sup>275</sup> Kim, *The Tears of My Soul*, pp. 83-84.

*shall preserve the integrity of Our Dear Leader [Kim Jong-il] with our lives.*<sup>276</sup>

It is important to note that what Kim Jong-il was referring to as the “socialist revolution in South Korea” was most likely the June 1987 uprising. (see Figure 5.8). When Chun refused to consider constitutional reforms to allow direct presidential elections and appointed Roh Tae Woo, another military general, as his presidential candidate, it unleashed violent nationwide protests. *The Washington Post* described Seoul as a “war zone,” and *The New York Times* reported how “for more than three hours the stone and tear gas canisters flew” in the city of Gwangju.<sup>277</sup> Kim Jong-il’s order suggested he was aware of the protests in South Korea and he was directing provocations against South Korea by the mid-1980s, but it was puzzling why he would blow up a South Korean airliner full of South Korean workers. Kim was desperate to fuel a revolution in South Korea and perhaps paying Seoul back for collaborating with the IOC to deny North Korea its “proper” role in the Olympics.

#### **5.8.1 Kim Jong-il Dispatches His Agents to Bomb a Korean Airliner**

North Korea sent the two secret agents to the Soviet Union before they traveled to Hungary and then to Austria under the guise of a Japanese father and daughter on holiday. They moved on to Yugoslavia and finally arrived in Iraq to board the Korean airliner. A support team of two agents met them at the Baghdad airport and delivered the bomb. Once they got on board, they set the bomb to explode nine hours later and deplaned at Abu Dhabi after a short flight. The plane exploded with 115 passengers onboard before it could reach Seoul on November 29. (see Figure 5.9). The Bahraini authorities apprehended the North Korean agents the next day; both attempted to commit suicide but the female agent Kim Hyun-hee survived. However, from the beginning, Kim’s partner, who was a highly experienced agent, knew their itinerary was flawed

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<sup>276</sup> Kim, *The Tears of My Soul*, p. 92.

<sup>277</sup> Chubb, *Contentious Activism & Inter-Korean Relations*, pp. 114-115.



and could be a problem. For example, how many Japanese tourists visit Belgrade?<sup>278</sup>



**Figure 5.9.** Recovered parts from Korean Airline Flight 858 after bombing.  
<http://www.koreabang.com/2013/videos/north-korean-terrorist-spills-all-on-south-korean-talk-show.html>.

The female agent was extradited to Seoul after two weeks of “relentless interrogation,” and she finally broke and confessed after eight more days of “more intense questioning in Seoul.” She was tried and sentenced to death in Seoul, but President Chun pardoned her because she was perceived as “an innocent victim of a society that continues to lack any respect for human rights and is ruled by a reign of terror.” Her testimony reinforced the totalitarian nature of the regime when she stated, “It is North Korean law that anyone who insults the Kim family is punished by being bludgeoned to death with an iron bar,” and “one wrong word and the whole family could be ruined.” Yet, she remained defensive when South Koreans criticized Kim Il-sung as a “bad guy” by placing

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<sup>278</sup> Kim, *The Tears of My Soul*, pp. 98-165.



the blame on Kim's subordinates who "misguide him or don't follow his directions properly."<sup>279</sup> She was wrong. Kim Jong-il understood the implications of the 1988 Olympics. It would symbolize to the world Pyongyang had lost the war of legitimacy with the South and he was desperate enough to use terrorism to undermine the games.<sup>280</sup>

### **5.8.2 U.S. Designates North Korea as a Sponsor of Terrorism**

Kim Hyun-hee eventually reunited with her relatives in the South and pledged to expose the truth about the Kims' rule in North Korea. The North did not wait long to discredit its former agent. Soon after her public confession of the bombing on January 15, 1988, Pyongyang produced another woman named Chung Hee-sun to discredit Kim's story. The North attempted to do this by refuting the story from South Korea that Kim had been the flower girl who welcomed a South Korean delegation to Pyongyang in the early 1970s during the North-South Talks. The woman who claimed to have presented the flowers to the South Korean delegation denounced Kim's story as South Korean propaganda and claimed to be a middle school teacher. In other words, Pyongyang was accusing Seoul of framing the North Koreans for the bombing. South Korean intelligence agents sensed that North Korea had "been pushed into a corner" and it was "trying to find a way out of it."<sup>281</sup>

In early February 1988, Bruce Cumings wrote an article in *The Los Angeles Times* arguing that "North Korea adamantly denied any involvement, saying that it would never attack Korean workers, that it condemned terrorism and that no such woman had ever lived in the north." Cumings also indicated that Moscow had accepted Pyongyang's account while Beijing "conspicuously refused to pass judgment." Cumings argued on North Korea's behalf by stating that the bombing "is a sharp departure from [North Korea's] previous behavior," and it was difficult to trust the South Korean authorities because "confessions wrung through torture are still common." He also suspected the timing of the

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<sup>279</sup> Kim, *The Tears of My Soul*, pp. 98-165.

<sup>280</sup> Cha, *Beyond the Final Score*, p. 56.

<sup>281</sup> Kim, *The Tears of My Soul*, pp. 84-85 and 110-180.

alleged terrorist's confession was suspect because it came soon after Moscow and Beijing committed to attending the Games. Cumings concluded that Seoul's aim was to isolate North Korea by attracting as many of its socialist partners as possible.<sup>282</sup> He was correct about Seoul's aim but wrong about Pyongyang's responsibility for the bombing.

As the two Koreas attempted to discredit one another over the incident, there was enough concern about Seoul's motives that the U.S. wanted to ensure Kim Hyun-hee's confession was not coerced by Seoul. It had a senior U.S. diplomat verify her story and, when satisfied it was genuine, designated North Korea as a state sponsor of terrorism.<sup>283</sup> On February 11, 1988, the U.S. IC confirmed the bombing was conceived out of Pyongyang's "frustration over its inability to cohost the 1988 Summer Olympic Games and its desire to portray Seoul as an unsafe venue for the Games." It also forecasted that the bombing was "the first incident of a campaign intended to raise doubts about South Korea's ability to assure the safety of participants and attendees at the Games."<sup>284</sup> Perhaps that is why President Reagan and Secretary of State George Shultz raised the prospect of more terrorist acts by Pyongyang with Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze. The Soviet official confidently responded, "Do not worry... We [the Soviet Union] will be in Seoul to compete. There will not be any terrorism."<sup>285</sup> He was right; there would be no more terrorist acts by Pyongyang to obstruct the Seoul Olympics and teams from 160 countries attended the Games that began on September 17, 1988. Most importantly, the successful Olympics marked Seoul's "final victory over the North in economic terms – a competition that began in 1948." It also gave Seoul an opportunity to show case its "peaceful democratic transition" to the

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<sup>282</sup> Bruce Cumings, "Despite an Air of Mystery, Downing of Korean Jetliner Puts a Chill on Peninsula," *Los Angeles Times*, (February 11, 1988), [http://articles.latimes.com/print/1988-02-11/local/me-41784\\_1\\_north-korean](http://articles.latimes.com/print/1988-02-11/local/me-41784_1_north-korean) (accessed June 9, 2015).

<sup>283</sup> Oberdorfer and Carlin, *The Two Koreas*, p. 145.

<sup>284</sup> CIA, "North Korea: Responsibility for the Korean Airliner Bombing," p. 2.

<sup>285</sup> Don Oberdorfer and Robert Carlin, *The Two Koreas*, p. 146.

world.<sup>286</sup> This indicated Kim Il-sung's war of reunification was finally over and demonstrated the Kims desperate attempt to continue the war.

### **5.8.3 Desperate Last Attempt to Reunify Korea before the Olympics**

First, what was Kim's desired outcome for the bombing? Unless one believes Seoul extracted Kim Hyun-hee's confession through torture, it is likely that Kim Jong-il personally directed the bombing of the South Korean airliner. He also made it clear that the aim of the mission was to achieve reunification of Korea but it failed. Kim probably realized that the successful Seoul Olympics would symbolize to the world that the South had won its competition with the North. The North initially attempted to co-host the Olympics but by July 1987 it refused the OIC's offer. The use of terror was a desperate attempt to threaten the Olympics in Seoul but the use of this tactic made it difficult for the South to retaliate since it took over two months for the CIA to disclose that Pyongyang was responsible. By that time, it made no sense to escalate tensions when Seoul was preparing for the Olympic Games.

Second, which form of power behavior was assessed to be more effective and third, what were the resources available for the mission? Kim Jong-il again resorted to limited coercive force but this time he ordered two highly trained North Korean covert operatives to commit terrorism by blowing up a South Korean civilian airliner. Arguably, it was a surprise even for North Korea since the plane was full of South Korean workers returning from difficult jobs in the Middle East. This was in stark contrast to the North Korean commandos who decided to save the four wood cutters even if that risked the successful execution of their mission at the Blue House. Some argued this was out of character even for North Korea, and the U.S. also had some doubts and had to confirm the female agent's confession was not coerced by Seoul.

Fourth, how did Kim Jong-il view the likelihood of success? It is likely that Kim believed the mission would be a success due to the North Korean agents' high level of training, but others involved in the mission knew the

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<sup>286</sup> Cha, *Beyond the Final Score*, pp. 56-57.

mission could fail. The plan appeared to have been rushed to exploit the June 1987 uprising and, from the beginning of the operation, the more experienced agent realized the itinerary was flawed and predicted there might be problems. Kim should have been informed about the risk of failure but there was no way for the senior agent to remain loyal and express his concern about the operation. However, even if it failed, North Korea was prepared to deny it was responsible and probably knew the time required to conduct a proper investigation would complicate a timely response from Seoul.

Fifth, what were the policy preferences of the key actors? North Korea was again enticed by the building of popular momentum for a revolution in South Korea after Chun's coup, the Gwangju massacre, and the June 1987 uprising. It seems evident that Kim Jong-il viewed it as the right moment to reunify the country. Pyongyang could have co-hosted the Games but it refused to participate when the IOC's offer failed to meet its expectations. The South Korean military initially demanded retaliation but Chun was astute enough to know he had to show restraint. Moreover, as expected, the U.S. provided legitimacy and support to his government despite the bloody suppression by his army in Gwangju. However, the U.S. would pay for its support of Chun's regime as more South Koreans began to perceive the U.S. as an imperialist power complicit with Seoul's authoritarian regimes. The U.S. finally reacted to North Korea's use of terror and designated it as a state sponsor of terrorism.

The successful Olympic Games in 1988 showed the world South Korea was on the path of becoming a "developed nation,"<sup>287</sup> but also encouraged the U.S. to seek bilateral talks with Pyongyang. Washington was finally willing to constructively engage Pyongyang on a wide range of issues, such as progress on North-South talks, recovery of U.S. remains from the Korean War, cessation of anti-U.S. propaganda, reduction of tensions along the DMZ, and abandonment of terrorism. The two sides' diplomats in Beijing met over thirty

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<sup>287</sup> Cha, *Beyond the Final Score*, p. 57.

times from December 1988 to September 1993 to pass “messages” but not much progress was made on substantive issues.<sup>288</sup>

In the meantime, Moscow informed Pyongyang in September 1990 that it would normalize relations with Seoul, and Beijing notified North Korea in May 1991 that it would support South Korea’s UN membership.<sup>289</sup> Simultaneously, both of its allies demanded cash payments for their goods at market prices and Pyongyang angrily threatened the Soviets “it might have to develop further its own security capacities.” Many observers viewed this “as a threat to develop nuclear weapons.”<sup>290</sup> As Kim’s dream of reunification was slipping away, the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991<sup>291</sup> and Moscow and Beijing established diplomatic relations with Seoul in 1992. The time had come for North Korea to pursue “genuine ‘self-reliance’ for the first time.”<sup>292</sup> According to Ahn Byung-joon, Kim Il-sung would play his “weak hand” by recasting North Korea’s “survival and security” by playing the nuclear card to buy his son more time.<sup>293</sup>

## 5.9 Summary

First, Kim Il-sung waged a long war of liberation from September 9, 1948 (founding of North Korea) to September 17, 1988 (start of the Seoul Olympics) to implement his strategy of reunification. What is evident is that even Kim Il-sung, who was known for his “uncanny ability to navigate between Great Power interests to achieve his own ends,” could not achieve his primary aim of reunification – despite his smart power attempts he failed to achieve his principal aim. However, he was able to recover quickly after the provocations and adjusted to the developing situation to gain the best possible outcome. Perhaps it is due to his Manchurian and anti-imperialist legacies but Kim never

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<sup>288</sup> Oberdorfer and Carlin, *The Two Koreas*, pp. 145-149.

<sup>289</sup> Scott Snyder, *China’s Rise and the Two Koreas* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 2009), pp. 35-37.

<sup>290</sup> Hazel Smith, *Hungary for Peace: International Security, Humanitarian Assistance, and Social Change in North Korea* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2005), p. 184.

<sup>291</sup> Armstrong, “*Juche* and North Korea’s Global Aspirations,” p. 13.

<sup>292</sup> Armstrong, “*Juche* and North Korea’s Global Aspirations,” pp. 13-15.

<sup>293</sup> Ahn, “The Man Who Would Be Kim,” p. 101. Ahn suspected North Korea possessed a nuclear weapon before Kim Il-sung’s death.

gave up on his desire to achieve reunification, and seemed to believe at least until the early 1980s that most South Koreans preferred his regime over dictatorships in the South. Kim was wrong but he kept on misreading popular rebellions in the South as support for North Korea. Furthermore, the evidence suggests it is likely that Kim Jong-il was involved in all three of the provocations after the Second Korean War, from the ax murders to the KAL 858 bombing. The North Koreans also failed to realize a revolution in the South or force the withdrawal of U.S. troops, but the growing *perception* was that they could attack the South and the U.S. lacked the will to hold Pyongyang accountable for the provocations due to its lessons learned from the Korean War.

Second, while Kim may have sensed abandonment by his two Communist patrons before the Seoul Olympics, he still felt betrayed by Moscow and Beijing when both demanded payment for goods at market rates in 1991 and established diplomatic relations with Seoul in 1992. This came at a time when North Korea's economy was in decline as demonstrated by the regime's "'Eat Two Meals a Day' campaign in 1992."<sup>294</sup> Kim attempted to restore the balance of power on the Korean Peninsula by withdrawing from the NPT in March 12, 1993,<sup>295</sup> to signal he would acquire his own nuclear weapons and made it clear survival was his principal aim as his final days neared. The next Chapter will examine how Kim Jong-il played the nuclear card, but suffice it to say he played the weak hand very well to ensure regime survival.

Third, the U.S. wanted to invoke another collective security arrangement at the UN to sanction North Korea after the NPT declaration, but countries in Northeast Asia opposed the move and sought to restore "the fragile balance of power on the Korean peninsula" through dialogue.<sup>296</sup> As the next chapter considers the post-Kim Il-sung period, it begs the question will the U.S. be as *willing* to use force and communicate forcefully with the North Koreans to

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<sup>294</sup> French, *North Korea: State of Paranoia*, p. 178.

<sup>295</sup> Kim Yongho, *North Korean Foreign Policy: Security Dilemma and Succession* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2010), p. 81.

<sup>296</sup> Jager, *Brothers at War*, pp.436-438.

resolve the nuclear crisis as it did to achieve its aims on the non-forceful repatriation of POWs or the ax murders at Panmunjom? Would the South Koreans be convinced to forcefully retaliate again as they did during the late 1960s when North Korea began to kill hundreds of its soldiers and civilians? Next, I examine how Kim Jong-il survived after his father's death in July 1994.

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## CHAPTER 6

### SURVIVAL OF THE KIM DYNASTY UNDER KIM JONG-IL

*They [North Koreans] have learned now, through Republican and Democratic administrations, that this [coercive diplomacy] is an effective way to operate. It yields concessions from the West while they continue to develop nuclear weapons. I hope a future president and secretary of state will break the cycle.*<sup>1</sup>

- Dick Cheney

#### 6.1 Introduction

In late 1994, Ahn Byung-joon argued “Kim Jong-il’s greatest asset is that he is the North’s only alternative” to his father. Although he was groomed for over 20 years as the successor, and managed to develop his own group of loyal followers, Ahn claimed that “except for his erratic behavior, Kim is largely an unknown entity.” Moreover, since he lacked charismatic leadership, like his father, his “reign may not last too long,” and thus it was not difficult for Ahn to imagine the rise “of reform-minded military-bureaucratic regime,” or “a violent collapse of the state.”<sup>2</sup> Of course, Ahn was wrong. In hindsight, Bruce Klinger observed in the fall of 2014, “Under Kim Jong-il, Pyongyang combined threats and assurances in a *comprehensive strategy*.” Kim had “raised brinksmanship to an art form in order to gain multiple policy goals,” and despite the hardline approach often associated with his rule, Pyongyang “always *calibrated* its position to avoid crossing the Rubicon.”<sup>3</sup> In due course, others would recognize him as a master strategist and this chapter supports this assessment.

This chapter argues that Kim’s core institutions sometimes appeared to hold opposing policy preferences but it was all part of an overarching strategy directed by the center (i.e., Kim Jong-il). In order to avoid direct confrontation

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<sup>1</sup> Dick Cheney with Liz Cheney, *In My Time: A Personal and Political Memoir* (New York: Threshold Editions, 2011), p. 493.

<sup>2</sup> Ahn, “The Man Who Would Be Kim,” pp. 94-99.

<sup>3</sup> Bruce Klinger, “North Korea Heading for the Abyss,” *Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 37, No. 3, Fall 2014, pp. 175-176.

with the U.S., Kim led the development of an effective survival strategy to defy predictions that his end was near. The aim of this chapter is to offer an alternative explanation that Kim Jong-il used smart power strategies to survive the famine years of the 1990s, the second nuclear crisis that began in 2002, and the use of force against the South in 2010. The question is how did he develop these successful strategies?

I argue that, while Kim Jong-il played a central role in the development and the execution of these strategies, it is likely that he had to cultivate his brightest, most loyal, and almost “untouchable” group of elite officials to assist his development and execution of smart power strategies to achieve his aims and ultimately survive.<sup>4</sup> Although it is more accurate to argue only those with the Kim family bloodline are truly untouchable, there are some elites who may be purged for failing to meet the Kims’ expectations, but they will not be executed because they are members of the true core elite. In other words, not everyone in the regime is expendable and loyalty matters. For instance, Han Kwang-sang, who was a senior official responsible for managing North Korea’s foreign currency, was rumored to have been executed after he disappeared in March 2015, but he resurfaced in November 2015. Some speculated “Han was punished and underwent some type of re-education.”<sup>5</sup> Again, some regime elites who possess critical skills and/or the right family backgrounds (i.e., demonstrated loyalty) could be immune from the most severe punishment.

On the other hand, Daniel Tudor and James Pearson suggest there is one “shadowy organization” that “may possess more power” than Kim Jong-un, and that is the Organization and Guidance Department (OGD). This remains to be seen, but they argue it is “the only part of the state that sees and knows everything.”<sup>6</sup> In fact, there have been many purges since Kim Jong-il’s death, but “the OGD leadership is essentially unchanged.” The roughly 300-man OGD

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<sup>4</sup> Jang, *Dear Leader*, p. 15 and pp. 252-258.

<sup>5</sup> John G. Grisafi, “Kim Jong Un may be easing reign of terror over elites: Shift from purge by execution to punishment by reeducation possible sign of stabilizing regime,” November 30, 2015, <https://www.nknews.org/2015/11/kim-jong-un-may-be-easing-reign-of-terror-over-elites/> (accessed December 11, 2015).

<sup>6</sup> Tudor and Pearson, *North Korea Confidential*, p. 96.

owes its accumulation of power to Kim Jong-il as he became its director in 1973 while ascending to power. As they maintained the monolithic guidance system, the OGD kept files on the core elite, facilitated communications between core institutions and the Supreme Leader, issued directives, implemented and enforced policy, supervised personnel appointments, and took care of the Kim family. They were united behind Kim because they did not have legitimacy without him.<sup>7</sup> More importantly, it suggests Kim Jong-il had the opportunity to appoint his own people to key positions for twenty years before he assumed power and this allowed him to forgo a massive purge when he assumed power.

As a result, instead of Kim Jong-il's core institutions and elites being truly at odds over policy preferences, they were more likely to be unified behind the Supreme Leader and followed his direction and guidance through the OGD. As discussed below, there were other key institutions that were essential to the success of Kim's survival strategies.<sup>8</sup> That said, I demonstrate how North Korea employed smart power by manufacturing a nuclear crisis to instill a fear of instability (not that it was unstable as diversionary theory suggests) during the famine years of the 1990s. As the first nuclear crisis began to intensify in the early 1990s, Kim Il-sung persuaded former U.S. President Jimmy Carter to help him change the initial hardline policy preference of the Clinton administration.<sup>9</sup> When Kim died in July 1994, the U.S. anticipated North Korea might cheat but, once Carter intervened, Washington was persuaded by formidable North Korean negotiators to make the deal with Kim Jong-il because it sought to prevent Pyongyang from acquiring nuclear weapons. Moreover, senior U.S. policymakers later agreed diplomacy was the best option.<sup>10</sup> This meant the U.S. had to abandon its initial preference for UN sanctions and the use of force, which aligned with Pyongyang's own preferences.

Beginning in the late 1990s, Kim Jong-il also took full advantage of the "lure of reconciliation" after Kim Dae-jung became the President of South Korea.

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<sup>7</sup> Tudor and Pearson, *North Korea Confidential*, pp. 96-109.

<sup>8</sup> Jang, *Dear Leader*, p. 15 and pp. 252-258.

<sup>9</sup> Wit, Poneman, and Gallucci, *The First North Korean Nuclear Crisis*, p. 394.

<sup>10</sup> Wit, Poneman, and Gallucci, *The First North Korean Nuclear Crisis*, p. 383.

When the first inter-Korean summit finally occurred on June 13, 2000, it was obvious Kim Jong-il had orchestrated the summit as if Kim Dae-jung was the “most important visitor ever to set foot in the North Korean capital.”<sup>11</sup> Kim Jong-il performed so well during the North-South summit it is worth taking the time to quote at length how the South Korean delegation described his performance:

The impression Chairman Kim had made disproved all of the preconceived notions of him held by President Kim [Dae-jung] and the official and unofficial members of his delegation, and demonstrated the inaccuracy of the West’s information about him. Our previous image of Kim Jong-il was simply that he was a strange dictator. We believed he had succeeded to power despite his incompetency and had been failing to feed the people, while consistently practicing a tyranny of fear. He had been known to be a depressed, eccentric man with a speech impediment. He was also known to be impulsive and unpredictable, making it difficult to anticipate what trouble he might cause next. He was known to be obstinate, militant, and cruel, and to lead an extravagant lifestyle that involved drinking parties and performances of “pleasure teams.” But the Kim Jong-il we actually saw was a different person. He was well-informed, intelligent, smart, and quick-witted; he had a vast accumulation of knowledge from his long, more than thirty-years of experience in important party positions. He was pleasant and had a good sense of humor. *He showed charisma and leadership.* At times, he led conversations in a rough voice in disregard of other people. When the situation permitted, he was very frank and candid. He also seemed to try to conform to proper courtesy.<sup>12</sup>

The summit was so successful that Kim Jong-il’s attractive power shaped the “ideas and beliefs” of the majority of South Koreans, as indicated by one South Korean poll in which 53 percent of respondents held the U.S. responsible for the nuclear crisis.<sup>13</sup> Kim was able to persuade the South Koreans that he was no longer “a dangerous threat,” but “a wayward relative eager to mend

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<sup>11</sup> Donald Kirk, *Korea Betrayed: Kim Dae Jung and Sunshine* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 163-164.

<sup>12</sup> Lim Dong-won, *Peacemaker: Twenty Years of Inter-Korean Relations and the North Korean Nuclear Issue* (Stanford, CA: Walter H. Shorenstein Asia-Pacific Research Center, 2012), p. 66.

<sup>13</sup> Christopher R. Hill, “The Elusive Vision of a Non-nuclear North Korea,” *The Washington Quarterly* (Spring 2013), p. 11.

fences after so many years of hostility.” Mike Chinoy described these developments as “a sea-change” in South Korean attitudes.”<sup>14</sup> The South Koreans rewarded him by delivering \$3 to 8 billion for organizing the summit. The summit achieved Pyongyang’s aims even though some in Seoul claimed “South Koreans were too ‘mature’ to fall for North Korean propaganda.”<sup>15</sup> Even when Kim Dae-jung left office in February 2003, his successor, Roh Moo-hyun, continued to embrace Kim’s Sunshine Policy and remained at odds with President Bush.<sup>16</sup>

North Korea was also defiant during the Bush administration by manipulating U.S. policy divergence with allies and partners in Northeast Asia and policy incoherence within the U.S. interagency between hardliners and pro-engagement advocates. North Korea’s ability to exercise smart power was measurably demonstrated when it convinced the Bush administration to abandon its initial hardline policy toward the regime, secured a second nuclear agreement in September 2005,<sup>17</sup> and forced the U.S. Treasury Department to reverse course and resolve the BDA issue.<sup>18</sup> This was a significant feat since Pyongyang had continued to ignore international warnings not to expand its nuclear arsenal, almost flaunted its illicit activities, and even proliferated nuclear technology to Syria.

After Roh Moo-hyun left office, both the U.S.’s and South Korea’s policies toward the North began to coalesce toward a hardline approach when Lee Myung-bak became the new President in February 2008. Kim Jong-il faced significant challenges, as Seoul arguably became Washington’s most important ally in Asia, soon after President Barack Obama took office in 2009. Obama would not reflect the policy incoherence of the Bush administration and his counterpart in Seoul was in no hurry to engage Pyongyang without its commitment to denuclearize. Kim responded with a missile launch and a

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<sup>14</sup> Chinoy, *Meltdown*, p. 18.

<sup>15</sup> Kirk, *Korea Betrayed*, p. 171.

<sup>16</sup> Chinoy, *Meltdown*, p. 155.

<sup>17</sup> Oberdorfer and Carlin, *The Two Koreas*, p. 406.

<sup>18</sup> Zarate, *Treasury’s War*, pp. 264-265.

second nuclear test in the spring of 2009<sup>19</sup> and, despite his poor health, directed the succession of his son<sup>20</sup> while overseeing two of the most provocative military actions against the South in 2010 since the end of the Korean War. Washington's and Seoul's efforts to retaliate after the Cheonan sinking fell short due to unwavering support for Pyongyang from Beijing and Moscow.<sup>21</sup> South Korea began to reconsider its hardline policy,<sup>22</sup> but Kim continued to apply pressure with an artillery attack on Yeonpyeong Island.<sup>23</sup> After another diplomatic effort to pressure Pyongyang failed, the U.S. returned to Beijing to negotiate a third nuclear deal with the North in December 2011. The deal was postponed due to the death of Kim Jong-il<sup>24</sup> but Kim had demonstrated his mastery of smart power as he quickly laid the groundwork for a successful power transition. However, before examining how Kim exercised smart power during his rule, I will briefly explain why the regime's survival tools that Kim Jong-il inherited from his father will be examined in Chapters 7 and 8.

## **6.2 Survival Tools: Kim Jong-il's Family Inheritance**

As noted in Chapter 2, the examination of the literature suggests that these tools all played some role in the regime's survival, but many of them have not stood the test of time while the explanatory power of others remains to be seen since the premise is still hypothetical and outcomes undetermined (e.g., without Chinese support or nuclear weapons, North Korea will not survive). Since Kim Jong-il did survive, the discussion regarding these two survival tools will continue in Chapter 7 when I examine the rule of Kim Jong-un and all of them will be re-examined in the concluding chapter. That said, I argue that

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<sup>19</sup> Lankov, *The Real North Korea*, pp. 175-176.

<sup>20</sup> Scott Snyder, "Kim Jong-il's Successor Dilemmas," *The Washington Quarterly*, January 2010, Vol. 33, No. 1, p. 36.

<sup>21</sup> Cha and Kim, "U.S.-Korea Relations: The Sinking of the Cheonan," pp. 1-2.

<sup>22</sup> Jeremy Chan, "The Incredible Shrinking Crisis: The Sinking of the Cheonan and Sino-Korean Relations," *US-Korea 2010 Yearbook*, *U.S.-Korea Institute at SAIS*, 2011, pp. 25-30.

<sup>23</sup> Cha and Kim, "U.S.-Korea Relations: The Sinking of the Cheonan," p. 1.

<sup>24</sup> Victor Cha and Ellen Kim, "US-Korea Relations: A Return to Dialogue," [http://csis.org/files/publication/1102qus\\_korea.pdf](http://csis.org/files/publication/1102qus_korea.pdf) (accessed July 15, 2013).

even under a politically weaker Kim Jong-il (relative to his father)<sup>25</sup> the application of smart power is an alternative explanation that is capable of providing more insights on how he survived. The evidence indicates Kim led the development and implementation of effective strategies, sometimes using these survival tools and at other times acquiring them as a reward for the expression of his power during the famine years of the 1990s and the second nuclear crisis with the Bush administration. Finally, Kim managed to negotiate his third nuclear deal with the Obama administration at the very end of his reign, but he died before it was consummated. One can only imagine what might have happened if he had lived a little longer.

### **6.3 Rise of Kim Jong-il and the Art of Transferring Charismatic Leadership**

When Kim Jong-il became the successor, many foreign observers believed he was “a playboy” and “would not outlive his father for too long, at least politically.”<sup>26</sup> They were all wrong. According to Andrei Lankov, he also became “a *charismatic* politician and shrewd manipulator who eventually proved to be a match for his ruthless and street-smart father.”<sup>27</sup> The question is how did North Korea manage to transfer his father’s charismatic authority to Kim Jong-il? As discussed in Chapter 4, Kim Il-sung’s legitimacy was based on his anti-Japanese guerrilla legacy and manipulated the patriarchal and charismatic authorities where the traditional social order, adoration of the people to the ruler, and the ruler’s “gifts of grace” reinforced his legitimacy. As noted by Lankov, one could argue Kim Jong-il also demonstrated charisma, and benefited from Korea’s dynastic tradition (i.e., patriarchal authority). However, to ensure the regime’s first succession of leadership, Pyongyang also revised the Constitution to establish legal authority to support the succession in 1992.<sup>28</sup>

The North Koreans initially denounced the backward Confucian order but later restored it to prominence by emphasizing the two key tenets of *chung*

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<sup>25</sup> McEachern, *Inside The Red Box*, p. 34.

<sup>26</sup> Lankov, *The Real North Korea*, p. 69.

<sup>27</sup> Lankov, *The Real North Korea*, p. 69.

<sup>28</sup> Zook, “Reforming North Korea: Law, Politics, and the Market Economy,” p. 139.

(loyalty to the ruler or the state) and *hyo* (filial piety) to restore Korea's customary form of statecraft.<sup>29</sup> In this traditionally Korean (and East Asian)<sup>30</sup> context, Kim Il-sung's authority as the supreme ruler is not simply derived from the people's dependence on him but instead is a manifestation of his role as the sage father-ruler based on the "patriarchal, familial-political order."<sup>31</sup> This narrative of Kim forming a lasting kinship with his guerrillas and orphans within the partisan family in Manchuria is constantly transmitted through epic stories, plays, films, poems, and art, and becomes the ideal familial relationship between the Kims and their people.<sup>32</sup> According to Lankov, Kim Il-sung was admired by many North Koreans even after his death, but "Kim Jong Il was probably the softest and most liberal" of the three Kims. In fact, he had reduced the number of political prisoners from about 200,000 in 1994 to about "80-90,000" by 2011. He also overlooked the marketization from below, the growing border trade with China, and "chose not to punish excessively refugees found in China."<sup>33</sup> In other words, he may surprisingly have been a transformative leader by tolerating these social changes in North Korea.

After Kim Il-sung's death, his son derived his legitimacy in part "from his exemplary performance of his filial obligations to the nation's dead father."<sup>34</sup> He mourned his father's death for three years like a good Confucian son of old, appointed his father as the country's eternal President, inaugurated a new calendar to commemorate his birth, and built numerous monuments and a mausoleum to house his father's embalmed body for all to see as if he were a living being.<sup>35</sup> With respect to charismatic authority, Kim Il-sung enjoyed one of its purest forms because of his anti-Japanese guerrilla legacy and, as we have

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<sup>29</sup> Kwon and Chung, *North Korea: Beyond Charismatic Politics*, p. 19.

<sup>30</sup> Anne Prescott, *East Asia in the World: An Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 2015), pp. 174-181.

<sup>31</sup> Kwon and Chung, *North Korea: Beyond Charismatic Politics*, p. 26.

<sup>32</sup> Kwon and Chung, *North Korea: Beyond Charismatic Politics*, pp. 26-66.

<sup>33</sup> Andrei Lankov, "Kim Jong Un's popularity, explained," NK News.Org, September 27, 2015, <http://www.nknews.org/2015/09/kim-jong-uns-popularity-explain/> (accessed September 27, 2015).

<sup>34</sup> Kwon and Chung, *North Korea: Beyond Charismatic Politics*, pp. 14-66.

<sup>35</sup> Kwon and Chung, *North Korea: Beyond Charismatic Politics*, pp. 71-75.



seen from the previous chapters, he and his group of MSD guerrilla followers would form the core leadership of North Korea. In order to create the conditions for hereditary charisma, the North Koreans would have to completely manufacture Kim Jong-il's ties to the guerrilla legacy.<sup>36</sup>

One of the important symbols concerning the transfer of power is the gift of a pistol from Kim Il-sung to his son. According to North Korean history, Kim Il-sung's mother gave him the two pistols that his father left behind when Kim was 14 years old. The message his father conveyed was "armed struggle was the supreme form of struggle for national independence."<sup>37</sup> In other words, those who took up arms to fight the Japanese would have the purest nationalist credentials. Upon receiving the pistols, Kim began to cultivate his own "unshakable revolutionary resolve to restore national independence through armed struggle." Moreover, North Koreans later claimed this was the true origin of Kim Jong-il's military-first politics, the idea that many have attributed to him since his father's death. This story, while manufactured, ties both Kims to the anti-Japanese and the anti-U.S. imperialist traditions of the North Korean revolution and reinforces the heroic nationalist bloodline of the Kim family.<sup>38</sup>

In addition to reviving Confucian traditions and attempting to transfer charismatic authority, Pyongyang also established legal authority to support the transition. In fact, Darren Zook described the 1992 Constitution "as the succession constitution," since it was revised to support the transition of power "in a secure and orderly manner after Kim Il-sung." For instance, the National Defense Commission (NDC) became an independent body as the "highest military leadership organ" and Kim Jong-il became the Chairman of the NDC. This implied that he was formally being delegated more authority as the second most powerful person in North Korea since the revised Constitution gave him "independent authority to issue orders and edicts."<sup>39</sup> This was not intended to challenge his father's presidential authority, but rather to signal to potential

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<sup>36</sup> Kwon and Chung, *North Korea: Beyond Charismatic Politics*, pp. 83-89.

<sup>37</sup> Kwon and Chung, *North Korea: Beyond Charismatic Politics*, p. 83.

<sup>38</sup> Kwon and Chung, *North Korea: Beyond Charismatic Politics*, pp. 83-89.

<sup>39</sup> Zook, "Reforming North Korea: Law, Politics, and the Market Economy," p. 140.

challengers he had total control of the KPA. After his father's death, the North revised the Constitution again in 1998 and it permanently abolished the presidency by designating Kim Il-sung as the Eternal President. Even though Kim Jong-il was able to consolidate his power, this move meant his father was ruling the country posthumously. This elevated the position of the Chairman of the NDC "to the highest organ of military and political power" as Kim Jong-il became the undisputed leader. Nonetheless, this symbolic gesture to memorialize his father implied Kim still needed him as a source of legitimacy "since any opposition to his rule would be in effect opposition to Kim Il-sung, the *juche* ideal and the very essence of the North Korean state."<sup>40</sup>

The problem that the Kims had to overcome was that "in the Communist movement, the positions of revolutionaries should be determined by the contributions they have made for the cause of the revolution and the people and by their future possibilities, and *should not be influenced in any way by blood relations*."<sup>41</sup> According to Kim Jong-il's biographers, the old Manchurian guerrillas were well aware of this revolutionary principle, but they nominated the younger Kim because they considered him the future of the Korean revolution. They claimed that Kim Il-sung remained uncharacteristically silent and indecisive during this discussion at the February 1974 plenary meeting of the KWP Political Committee. Kim's guerrillas apparently sensed that he felt uneasy about his son becoming his successor and, although they had *always* carried out his orders unconditionally, this time "they would not obey the President's intention." Without any opposition from his guerrillas, Kim reportedly declared, "If all the committee members are in agreement, I have no objections to Kim Jong-il being elected to the Political Committee."<sup>42</sup>

Despite Kim Jong-il's biographers' claims that his father was reluctant to choose his son as successor, the Supreme Leader probably had his own reasons for doing so despite Kim Jong-il's lack of experience and

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<sup>40</sup> Zook, "Reforming North Korea: Law, Politics, and the Market Economy," pp. 139-143.

<sup>41</sup> Tak Jin, Kim Gang-il, and Pak Hong-je, *Great Leader: Kim Jong Il*, Volume [II] (Tokyo, Japan: Sorinsha Publishers, 1986), p. 16.

<sup>42</sup> Tak, Kim, and Pak, *Great Leader: Kim Jong Il*, Volume [II], pp. 15-17.

accomplishments at the time. According to Kim Young C., the Supreme Leader may have chosen his son for the following reasons:

First, the revolutionary cause of the great leader Kim Il Sung cannot be completed in a generation. It is a historic task that can be completed only through the efforts of succeeding generations. Second, the successor to the leader must emerge from the new generation, not from the present generation. *Third, it is necessary for a successor to the great leader to go through a preparatory period, learning and inheriting from the leader the thought, theory, and art of leadership. Fourth, the successor should be a man who is boundlessly loyal to the leader and who embodies the leader's ideology and leadership qualities.* Jong Il, described as “endlessly loyal to the great leader, perfectly embodying the ideas, outstanding leadership, and noble traits of the leader, and brilliantly upholding the grand plan and intention of the leader at the highest level,” is said to provide the perfect answer to the question of succession.<sup>43</sup>

On the other hand, Lim argues that Kim Il-sung made the choice because of his concerns over the Soviets' de-Stalinization campaign following the death of Stalin in 1953, Lin Biao's attempted assassination of Mao after he became his successor, his brother's poor health, his guerrillas' opposition to his wife, and the state of his own health. In other words, these factors led Kim to desire the most loyal successor who would promote his legacy while he was still alive.

Yet, Kim Jong-il had demonstrated his ability “in the art and literature sector” and impressed his father and his guerrillas when he successfully coordinated the Fifth Party Congress in 1970. He was also the oldest son of the Supreme Leader who had demonstrated capabilities to lead at a relatively young age.<sup>44</sup> This suggests performance also mattered, and challenges Weber's suggestion that administrators in the charismatic leadership system are by and large selected based on their own charisma and personal loyalty to the ruler, *not* based on any special qualification. This suggests it is also plausible

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<sup>43</sup> Kim Young C., “North Korea in 1980: The Son Also Rises,” *Asian Survey*, Vol. 21, No. 1, (January 1981), p. 113.

<sup>44</sup> Lim, *Kim Jong Il's Leadership of North Korea*, pp. 52-57.

that the Kims may have chosen many of their senior administrators because of their capabilities to perform key tasks required for regime maintenance but it was largely unnoticed until organizations like the OGD were examined (see below). In other words, the system's success depends on the unity of the ruler and his administrative staff,<sup>45</sup> and their disciples' ability to perform. As a result, the discussion of leadership from Chapter 4 suggests Kim Jong-il was more than a transactional leader that used a directing style of leadership. Similar to his father, he probably derived his power from a mix of the ten sources of power that Bryan Watters discussed in his work, and Kim likely relied on both directing and coaching styles with personnel in key institutions. Despite Secretary of State Madeleine Albright's impression that his subordinates "had little or no independence or flexibility,"<sup>46</sup> it is plausible that like other effective leaders, based on the situation, Kim was capable of using supporting and even delegating styles<sup>47</sup> with those he trusted.

For example, as Kim Jong-il rose to power in the early 1970s, he commanded the Three Revolutions Movement of young loyalist to "weaken and sweep away the old guard," and those who performed well "were fast-tracked to positions of power by Kim Jong Il."<sup>48</sup> He trusted his negotiators, such as Kim Kye-kwan, and empowered him to negotiate on his behalf. Moreover, when Kim reassigned General Kim Kyok-sik as the commander of the IV Corps prior to the provocations in 2010,<sup>49</sup> the Supreme Leader most likely delegated his authority to direct the operations near the NLL. Finally, Kim Jong-il approved the appointment of Jang Song-thaek as a member of the NDC in 2009 and Jang

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<sup>45</sup> Weber, "The Three Types of Legitimate Rule," pp. 6-8.

<sup>46</sup> Chinoy, *Meltdown*, p. 33.

<sup>47</sup> Peter G. Northouse, *Leadership*, 7th ed., p. 99.

<sup>48</sup> Tudor and Pearson, *North Korea Confidential*, pp. 90-91. The Three Revolutionary Movement focused on cultural, technical, and ideological aspects of North Korean society to strengthen the regime. Unlike China's Red Guards, the center (i.e., Kim Jong-il) controlled the movement.

<sup>49</sup> Bruce E. Bechtol, Jr., *The Last Days of Kim Jong-il, The North Korean Threat in a Changing Era* (Dulles, VA: Potomac Books, 2013), pp. 59-61.

played a central role in promoting the leadership succession to his son.<sup>50</sup> Although one could argue Kim was a negative transformational leader because he failed to meet the needs and expectations of the majority of his people, Lankov emphasized that “it was Kim Il Sung’s policies that made disaster [of the 1990s] unavoidable.”<sup>51</sup> Moreover, the evidence suggests Kim Jong-il relied on the core members of his regime to achieve desired outcomes. Kim still used coercion after he consolidated power, but he seemed to have been judicious when he decided to do so. Kim like his father did not execute everyone for their failures.<sup>52</sup> Some were rehabilitated and Jang Song-thaek is a good example of this practice. He disappeared from public view in 2003 but he returned in 2006 to play a powerful role in North Korea under Kim Jong-il.<sup>53</sup> As discussed in Chapter 7, Jang’s growing power after his father’s death would force Kim Jong-un, perhaps at the urging of the OGD, to execute him in 2013.

In sum, once Kim Jong-il proved himself to be a worthy successor, the regime used a mix of neo-Confucian and familial (i.e., patriarchal), and charismatic (guerrilla and anti-imperialist legacy) legitimacy to restore Korea’s traditional style of statecraft and establish hereditary charismatic authority in North Korea. Once he consolidated power, Kim Jong-il’s leadership style<sup>54</sup> was likely to have been a situational style that went beyond directing and transactional leadership. However, the use of other leadership styles (e.g., delegating style) probably only applied to those within the true core elite or select number of bureaucrats involved in key regime activities. Moreover, as discussed above, Lankov even argued his rule may have been the “most liberal” by North Korean standards. For instance, when the regime’s attempt to regain

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<sup>50</sup> Choe Sang-hun, Shin Gi-Wook and David Straub, *Troubled Transition: North Korea’s Politics, Economy, and External Relations* (Stanford, CA: The Walter H. Shorenstein Asia-Pacific Research Center, 2013), pp. 48-51.

<sup>51</sup> Andrei Lankov, “Kim Jong Un’s popularity, explained.”

<sup>52</sup> Grisafi, “Kim Jong Un may be easing reign of terror over elites.”

<sup>53</sup> Choe, Shin, and Straub, *Troubled Transition*, pp. 47-49.

<sup>54</sup> In his latest book (*Leadership*, 7<sup>th</sup> ed., 2016), Peter Northouse argued, “coercive people are not used as models of ideal leadership. Our definition suggests that leadership is reserved for those who influence a group of individual toward a common goal.” Thus he ruled out Kim Jong-il as a leader. Nevertheless, this study applies leadership theories to assess the Kims’ leadership styles.

“political control” through currency reform in 2009 failed, North Korea’s Premier Kim Yong-il stated, “I sincerely apologize as we pushed ahead with it without a sufficient preparation so it caused a big pain to the people’ and the state ‘will do its best to stabilize people’s lives’.”<sup>55</sup> As a result, the social change that Kim Jong-il permitted continues to this day (i.e., positive transformational leadership). In short, Kim was in control, but his rule was not solely based on totalitarianism. In fact, evidence suggests his rule led to a post-totalitarian transition in North Korea. Next, I examine North Korea’s use of smart power from 1994 to 2011.

#### **6.4 Kim’s Use of Smart Power during Famine Years of the 1990s**

I begin by exploring the key factors that led to the first U.S.-North Korea nuclear deal, the so-called 1994 Agreed Framework. Then I will consider how North Korea responded to U.S. demands to inspect an apparent underground nuclear facility at Kumchang-ri in the late 1990s and how it leveraged the Taepodong-1 missile launch in August 1998 to build trust with the U.S. leadership.<sup>56</sup> What I argue is that, by closely examining Pyongyang’s formal and informal diplomatic efforts along with its other policies and actions since the 1990s, evidence reveals the leadership in key North Korean institutions coordinated their actions under a central authority.<sup>57</sup> The fact that U.S. negotiations with Pyongyang slowed down noticeably after Kim Jong-il’s stroke in 2008 suggests he was clearly in charge from the very beginning of his rule.<sup>58</sup> According to the Secretary of State’s Morning Intelligence Summary of March 29, 1994, Kim Jong-il was “closely associated” with the ongoing U.S.-North Korea nuclear negotiations at the time and, for domestic purposes, he had to “prove he was not taken in by Washington and is capable of standing up to

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<sup>55</sup> Scott Snyder, “North Korea Currency Reform: What Happened and What Will Happen To Its Economy?,” Paper presented at 2010 Global Forum on North Korea Economy, Korea Economic Daily and Hyundai Research Institute, Seoul, Korea, March 31, 2010, pp. 1-4.

<sup>56</sup> Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas*, pp. 410-411.

<sup>57</sup> Cumings, “The Kims’ Three Bodies,” p. 216.

<sup>58</sup> Cha, *The Impossible State*, p. 271.

outside pressure.”<sup>59</sup> Consequently, how did Kim convince U.S. negotiators to negotiate a deal arguably in his favor when many in the U.S. cautioned that North Koreans could not be trusted?

#### **6.4.1 Agreed Framework: Origin of Kim’s Use of Smart Power**

It is probably an understatement to suggest that North Korean negotiators had a significant challenge in convincing the U.S. that they could be trusted as negotiating partners. As anticipated, the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) argued North Korea would never give up its nuclear weapons and presumed it would also pursue a covert program.<sup>60</sup> However, the State Department’s Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR) believed a nuclear deal was possible because Pyongyang had long desired improved relations with Washington and sought stability during a period of leadership transition.<sup>61</sup> U.S. negotiators at the time stressed they would rely on both multilateral diplomacy and bilateral talks to engage North Korea, and the latter was not a gift for its bad behavior but rather “a vector to convey U.S. perspectives unalloyed and undiluted by multilateral involvement.” Sometimes the U.S. needed unfettered access to engage directly with North Korea to protect “its unique interests and objectives.” More importantly, U.S. negotiators in the mid-1990s viewed bilateral negotiations as “another policy instrument in a pretty empty toolbox” to address the North Korean problem.<sup>62</sup>

One of Pyongyang’s messages after Kim Il-sung’s death supported the INR position by suggesting “the ‘historic and significant’ Kim-Carter meeting” made negotiations possible.<sup>63</sup> North Korea was referring to Kim Il-sung’s meeting with former President Carter on June 16, 1994.<sup>64</sup> During this historic meeting, Kim noted the problem between the two countries was lack of trust

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<sup>59</sup> Department of State, “DPRK, Hoping for the Best, Bracing for the Worst,” The Secretary’s Morning Intelligence Summary, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, March 29, 1994, p. 1.

<sup>60</sup> Wit, Poneman, and Gallucci, *The First North Korean Nuclear Crisis*, p. 250.

<sup>61</sup> Wit, Poneman, and Gallucci, *The First North Korean Nuclear Crisis*, p. 250.

<sup>62</sup> Wit, Poneman, and Gallucci, *The First North Korean Nuclear Crisis*, pp. 400-401.

<sup>63</sup> Wit, Poneman, and Gallucci, *The First North Korean Nuclear Crisis*, pp. 251-259.

<sup>64</sup> Marion Creekmore, Jr., *A Moment of Crisis: Jimmy Carter, the Power of a Peacemaker, and North Korea’s Nuclear Ambitions* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2006), p. 148.

and stated North Korea had “no need and no way of using plutonium to make nuclear weapons.” Kim indicated he was willing to give up the 5-megawatt (MW) reactor for a Light Water Reactor (LWR), would honor the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), and would allow International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspectors to continue their monitoring activities in North Korea. Carter believed Kim was sincere and went on CNN to explain the deal to pre-empt Clinton’s consideration of UN sanctions and U.S. military options. Some in the U.S. administration were furious and discounted the readout from the meeting as nothing new, but were relieved Kim had “agreed to keep the IAEA inspectors in place.”<sup>65</sup> President Clinton indicated he did not trust Pyongyang until he received a letter from Kim Il-sung confirming what Carter had said; he agreed to resume bilateral talks and hold off on sanctions.<sup>66</sup> In short, Kim-Il-sung used his power of attraction and persuasion to convince Carter to change the U.S.’s initial preference for UN sanctions and the potential use of force.

The problem was Kim unexpectedly died on July 8, 1994, before a nuclear deal was finalized, but President Clinton chose not to change his policy preference and offered condolences by “expressing sympathy for the North Korean people.”<sup>67</sup> Carter was convinced Kim Il-sung was the final authority in North Korea and his promise to denuclearize was not going to be reversed even after his death.<sup>68</sup> Later, Kang Sok-ju, the First Vice Foreign Minister,<sup>69</sup> informed his counterpart Robert Gallucci, the chief U.S. negotiator at the time, that Pyongyang had softened its demands due to Washington’s symbolic gesture after Kim’s death. Seoul later accused Washington of going soft on Pyongyang, but the U.S. emphasized it could no longer afford to stand by and watch the North Koreans “remove the spent fuel from Yongbyon.”<sup>70</sup> As Albright noted later, it appeared as if the North Koreans knew when not to “push their luck,”<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Creekmore, Jr., *A Moment of Crisis*, pp. 153-184.

<sup>66</sup> Bill Clinton, *My Life* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004), p. 603.

<sup>67</sup> Wit, Poneman, and Gallucci, *The First North Korean Nuclear Crisis*, pp. 251-259.

<sup>68</sup> Creekmore, *A Moment of Crisis*, p. 166.

<sup>69</sup> Wit, Poneman, and Gallucci, *The First North Korean Nuclear Crisis*, p. 37.

<sup>70</sup> Wit, Poneman, and Gallucci, *The First North Korean Nuclear Crisis*, p. 264.

<sup>71</sup> Madeleine Albright, *Madam Secretary, A Memoir* (New York: Miramax Books, 2003), p. 456.



which suggests their careful consideration of contextual intelligence as well as the probability of success.

In September 1994, U.S. negotiators continued to press the North Koreans to freeze and dismantle their nuclear programs, ship the spent fuel out of the country as soon as possible, remain in the NPT, accept inspections of nuclear facilities, and improve relations with South Korea. The North Koreans explained it was premature to talk about inspections “before trust was built” between the two countries. They would agree to inspections only after the LWRs were built in North Korea. U.S. negotiators believed informal discussions with North Koreans would yield better results and, as anticipated, Kang Sok-ju agreed to accept South Korean nuclear reactors, something he had resisted before, as long as the U.S. guaranteed their delivery. Kang also softened his demands on normalizing diplomatic relations and trade with the U.S.,<sup>72</sup> both being unrealistic demands at the time, and used them to his advantage to secure the LWRs, which was his aim from the very beginning.

Pyongyang subsequently proposed a new deal requesting U.S. presidential security assurance and energy assistance before it would freeze and allow IAEA monitoring of spent fuel rods and halting the construction of two new nuclear reactors. However, Kang refused to concede on the point that the 5-MW reactor must shut down and warned the reactor could be operating until the new LWRs were producing energy, and only then would Pyongyang rejoin the NPT. He also refused to ship the spent fuel overseas.<sup>73</sup> The KPA appeared to keep the pressure on the U.S. by issuing a statement that it must protect North Korea’s sovereignty, and thus it “can never allow any attempt to open up military facilities through special inspections.”<sup>74</sup> Kang cautioned that if there was no deal the KPA would call for restarting the 5-MW reactor and might even pursue reprocessing of plutonium. Kang again showed some flexibility to gain trust by suggesting that if Washington would give Pyongyang more time on

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<sup>72</sup> Wit, Poneman, and Gallucci, *The First North Korean Nuclear Crisis*, pp. 298-299.

<sup>73</sup> Wit, Poneman, and Gallucci, *The First North Korean Nuclear Crisis*, pp. 300-301.

<sup>74</sup> Wit, Poneman, and Gallucci, *The First North Korean Nuclear Crisis*, p. 302.

special inspections it might result in North Korean commitment not to restart the 5-MW reactor.<sup>75</sup> After a Principals meeting in Washington, Gallucci received their approval to defer the special inspection until the LWRs' key components were delivered. U.S. policymakers also decided to secure the spent fuel right away but left open the timing of the shipment out of North Korea. If the negotiations failed, the U.S. would pursue sanctions at the UN.<sup>76</sup> Kang again managed to set the agenda for this round of talks to shape the U.S. position to align with his and gain concurrence to defer special inspections and to retain the spent fuel in North Korea for an unspecified amount of time.



**Figure 6.1.** Robert Gallucci and Kang Sok-ju signing of the 1994 Agreed Framework.  
[http://graphics8.nytimes.com/images/2009/04/05/world/05korea\\_accord1994.jpg](http://graphics8.nytimes.com/images/2009/04/05/world/05korea_accord1994.jpg)

When the negotiations resumed at the working level, it was understood the U.S. “would not attack North Korea with nuclear weapons,” and the growing sentiment on the U.S. side was that North Koreans were ready to

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<sup>75</sup> Wit, Poneman, and Gallucci, *The First North Korean Nuclear Crisis*, pp. 301-303.

<sup>76</sup> Wit, Poneman, and Gallucci, *The First North Korean Nuclear Crisis*, p. 306.

compromise.<sup>77</sup> On October 6, 1994, Kang informed Gallucci that the KPA was arguing the deal was a trick to gain access to sensitive military facilities, and they could not agree to safeguards before the LWRs were provided. As a result, senior INR analysts viewed Kang as a benign negotiator and believed there were policy disagreements in Pyongyang but North Koreans were ready to make a deal.<sup>78</sup> However, it could also have been a well-coordinated North Korean effort to achieve increased leverage during negotiations with the U.S. Kang then offered to implement IAEA safeguards and special inspections once 70 to 80 percent of the LWR components were shipped to North Korea. Some U.S. negotiators trusted the North Korean negotiators and were convinced this offer was sincere and “were confident of a breakthrough.” As the negotiations continued, Kang’s position was perceived to be weakening and he finally agreed to “full compliance with its safeguards obligations, including all the steps that would be required by the IAEA.”<sup>79</sup> This seems to have been an obvious requirement if Pyongyang was prepared to freeze its nuclear programs.

The U.S. negotiators assumed Kim had overruled the hardliners in the KPA who opposed the negotiations. By October 14, 1994, Pyongyang indicated it would not construct any new nuclear facilities and halt its operations at the 5-MW reactor. Again, the former concession was not a major one since the North Koreans had yet to construct these facilities and to freeze the program they would have to shut down the 5-MW reactor. Still, these were viewed as major concessions coupled with the “freeze and dismantlement of existing facilities.” North Koreans may have anticipated these concessions were enough to change the negotiating position of the U.S. in favor of its own interests. This opened the door for the U.S. to provide 500,000 tons of heavy fuel oil as an alternative source of energy. The last hurdle was a major disagreement on North-South dialogue as the final condition for the agreement. The U.S. had to accept South Korean demands, as part of its parallel multilateral approach, for the inter-

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<sup>77</sup> Wit, Poneman, and Gallucci, *The First North Korean Nuclear Crisis*, p. 306.

<sup>78</sup> Wit, Poneman, and Gallucci, *The First North Korean Nuclear Crisis*, pp. 307-310.

<sup>79</sup> Wit, Poneman, and Gallucci, *The First North Korean Nuclear Crisis*, pp. 307-327.

Korean talks to make the deal work. The U.S. negotiators were sympathetic and observed “genuine disappointment on the faces of their [North Korean] counterparts” as they held firm on the inter-Korean talks as part of the deal. The U.S. continued to assume North Korean negotiators would have a difficult time with the KWP since the Party, not its diplomats, was responsible for North-South relations. They felt Kang caved in when he reluctantly accepted bilateral talks with South Korea. This appeared to be a concession but both sides knew this was necessary to finalize the deal. Pyongyang simply had to meet with Seoul to honor the commitment and the U.S. had to demand it to gain the support of the South Koreans. The remaining obstacles to the agreement were finally resolved on October 17, 1994.<sup>80</sup> (see Figure 6.1). In the end, Gallucci defended the nuclear deal for saving the NPT, freezing of North Korea’s nuclear program, and offering the potential to dismantling of the existing nuclear program.<sup>81</sup> Nevertheless, the perception was Kim had gotten a better deal.

#### **6.4.2 Post-Agreed Framework and the Use of Smart Power**

As the 1994 agreement was being implemented into the late 1990s, one of the obstacles that threatened the nuclear deal was the Kumchang-ri incident of the summer of 1998.<sup>82</sup> DIA was convinced Kumchang-ri was a secret nuclear facility and North Korea “was cheating on the Agreed Framework,”<sup>83</sup> but the inspection of the site in May 1999 failed to confirm this and disclosed it was only empty tunnels.<sup>84</sup> Gary Samore, the National Security Council’s (NSC) nonproliferation expert, later took responsibility for advocating DIA’s incorrect assessment of the suspected nuclear site and wrote “that was the biggest mistake I made in my career as a civil servant.”<sup>85</sup> In exchange for the inspection, Pyongyang received 600,000 tons of food aid<sup>86</sup> and kept Kim Dae-

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<sup>80</sup> Wit, Poneman, and Gallucci, *The First North Korean Nuclear Crisis*, pp. 310-327.

<sup>81</sup> Wit, Poneman, and Gallucci, *The First North Korean Nuclear Crisis*, p. 407.

<sup>82</sup> Wit, Poneman, and Gallucci, *The First North Korean Nuclear Crisis*, p. 374.

<sup>83</sup> Chinoy, *Meltdown*, p. 13.

<sup>84</sup> Kirk, *Korea Betrayed*, pp. 152-153.

<sup>85</sup> Chinoy, *Meltdown*, p. 14.

<sup>86</sup> Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas*, Revised and Updated, p. 413.

jang's hope of an inter-Korean summit alive.<sup>87</sup> In this case, Pyongyang did not attempt to change the initial position of the U.S. but manipulated it to embarrass the U.S. and to acquire aid.

After the Kumchang-ri incident, Washington began to focus on North Korea's missiles and disclosed Pyongyang was ready to conduct another Taepodong missile launch.<sup>88</sup> The U.S. became more concerned about Pyongyang's missile programs after it launched a Taepodong missile in August 1998, with the potential to threaten U.S. territory.<sup>89</sup> In fact, some viewed it as a prototype nuclear ICBM test.<sup>90</sup> The U.S. held a bilateral meeting with North Korea in October 1998 but it was unable to reach a missile deal.<sup>91</sup> This forced President Clinton to salvage the Agreed Framework in November 1998 by appointing former Secretary of Defense William Perry "as coordinator for U.S. policy toward North Korea."<sup>92</sup> After Perry's visit to Pyongyang in May 1999, North Korea announced a self-imposed missile moratorium as long as talks continued with the U.S.<sup>93</sup> The moratorium improved relations with Washington. The Perry visit resulted in a policy recommendation "to increase outside assistance... in exchange for steps by the North to reduce its threatening military posture." It was intended to be a litmus test not only for Pyongyang to honor the 1994 Agreed Framework but also to cease its missile launches and military provocations.<sup>94</sup> Later in July 2000, Kim Jong-il informed Russian President Vladimir Putin he would give up his space launches if others provided assistance to launch his satellites.<sup>95</sup> Kim Yong-ho provided more details by arguing that Kim and Putin "agreed that Russia could launch two or three satellites a year" if North Korea stopped producing missiles. Albright apparently

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<sup>87</sup> Kirk, *Korea Betrayed*, p. 153.

<sup>88</sup> McEachern, *Inside The Red Box*, pp. 132-134.

<sup>89</sup> Albright, *Madam Secretary*, p. 458.

<sup>90</sup> Wit, Poneman, and Gallucci, *The First North Korean Nuclear Crisis*, p. 374.

<sup>91</sup> Chinoy, *Meltdown*, pp. 22-26.

<sup>92</sup> Wit, Poneman, and Gallucci, *The First North Korean Nuclear Crisis*, p. 375.

<sup>93</sup> Albright, *Madam Secretary*, p. 458.

<sup>94</sup> Morton I. Abramowitz and James T. Laney, Co-Chairs and Michael J. Green, Project Director, "U.S. Policy Toward North Korea: Next Steps," Report of an Independent Task Force Sponsored by the Council on Foreign Relations, 1999, p. 1.

<sup>95</sup> Chinoy, *Meltdown*, p. 19.

was persuaded to consider the offer during her visit to Pyongyang in October 2000, but it “vanished” as a viable solution during the Bush administration. Putin reportedly developed very close “personal ties” with Kim that even after the nuclear test in 2006, he offered to forgive \$8 billion in North Korean debt.<sup>96</sup>



**Figure 6.2.** Vice Marshal Cho Myong-rak meets with President Bill Clinton in the oval office on October 10, 2000. <https://nkresearcher.files.wordpress.com/2015/12/cho-and-bill.jpg?w=443&h=302&crop=1>

A major breakthrough in bilateral relations came when KPA Vice Marshal Jo Myong-rak met with Clinton in the Oval Office on October 10, 2000, in full dress uniform. Some believed Jo’s uniform symbolized KPA and KWP support of Kim Jong-il’s diplomatic efforts with the U.S. Jo brought a letter from Kim Jong-il stating he “was prepared to cease the production, sale, and use of long-range ballistic missiles.” Jo also delivered the message that, if Clinton would visit North Korea, “Kim Jong-il will guarantee that he will satisfy all your security concerns.” Clinton understood this meeting was about building rapport and turned on his charm so Vice Marshal Jo could convey the message that Clinton is “somebody that we can trust.” When the two parted, all the Americans in the

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<sup>96</sup> Kim, *North Korean Foreign Policy*, pp. 162-163.

room “knew there was something real here. Kim Jong-il was ready to do a [missile] deal.”<sup>97</sup> This was another successful attempt by the North to attract in order to shape U.S. policymakers’ ideas and beliefs to ensure the attainment of Kim’s policy preferences.



**Figure 6.3.** Kim Jong-il meets with Secretary of State Madeleine Albright in Pyongyang in late October 2000.

[http://search.aol.com/aol/imageDetails?s\\_it=imageDetails&q=kim+jong+il+and+madeline+albright+in+Pyongyang&host=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.hapblog.com%2F2014%2F01%2Fmadeleine-albright-blasts-rodman-trip.html&v\\_t=webmail-](http://search.aol.com/aol/imageDetails?s_it=imageDetails&q=kim+jong+il+and+madeline+albright+in+Pyongyang&host=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.hapblog.com%2F2014%2F01%2Fmadeleine-albright-blasts-rodman-trip.html&v_t=webmail-)

Clinton decided to send then Secretary of State Madeleine Albright to lay the groundwork for a potential summit with Kim in Pyongyang.<sup>98</sup> She had already been informed by the State Department’s INR after the North-South summit that Kim’s performance had “undermined” the near consensus view in the U.S. Intelligence Community that he was “irrational and illogical.” In fact, he was so well informed that “he may well know more about South Korea than Kim Dae-jung knows about events in the North.” What’s more, the North was surprisingly flexible and it survived because it did not promote “an ideologically

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<sup>97</sup> Chinoy, *Meltdown*, pp. 22-26.

<sup>98</sup> Albright, *Madam Secretary*, pp. 459-466.

rigid foreign policy.” In fact, “the policy reacted to changing circumstances in and around the peninsula.”<sup>99</sup> Again, this challenged the notion North Korea survives merely because of its fortuitous geographical location next to China. Kim Jong-il was capable of demonstrating his competence to garner respect and admiration by the U.S.

Clinton also agreed to a joint communique with Marshal Jo, in which both sides vowed “no hostile intent” and committed to improve relations. When Albright met Jo in Pyongyang, she presented him with a letter from Clinton laying out his expectations for her visit. She finally met Kim Jong-il and he thanked her for Clinton’s condolence message sent after his father’s death and the recent U.S. humanitarian aid. She raised the issue of missiles; Kim claimed he was selling missiles to raise money and would be willing to suspend sales for U.S. compensation. Albright pushed back and questioned his rationale for the missiles, and Kim acknowledged they were also for national defense. When she met Kim the next day, Albright raised several technical issues regarding the missile deal. Kim surprised her by “answering the questions himself, not even consulting the expert by his side.” He also raised the issue of hardliners in Pyongyang by noting that half of the KPA was skeptical of rapprochement with the U.S. and even some in the Foreign Ministry opposed it. Kim said the “solution rested with normalization of relations.”<sup>100</sup>

As Albright departed Pyongyang, she observed Kim Jong-il “was serious,” and confirmed other foreign leaders’ assessment that Kim “was an intelligent man who knew what he wanted. He was isolated, not uninformed.”<sup>101</sup> The clear impression was Kim “made virtually all the decisions,” and as noted above, “Officials below him had little or no independence or flexibility.”<sup>102</sup> Albright concluded Kim’s aim was to normalize relations with the U.S., which would provide security assurance and legitimize his rule.<sup>103</sup> Albright was

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<sup>99</sup> Chinoy, *Meltdown*, pp. 18-19.

<sup>100</sup> Albright, *Madam Secretary*, pp. 459-466.

<sup>101</sup> Albright, *Madam Secretary*, pp. 466-469.

<sup>102</sup> Chinoy, *Meltdown*, p. 33.

<sup>103</sup> Albright, *Madam Secretary*, pp. 466-469.



convinced that in exchange Kim was ready to make a missile deal with Clinton.<sup>104</sup> When she returned to Washington, it was too late for Clinton to make the trip to seal the agreement with Kim in Pyongyang.<sup>105</sup> Nevertheless, Kim's power of attraction eventually led to easing of U.S. sanctions for the first time since 1993,<sup>106</sup> and included lifting "restrictions on nonmilitary trade, financial transactions, travel, and official contacts."<sup>107</sup> Kim's high-level engagement with Albright changed her initial impression of him and shaped U.S. policy preferences to align with his own. In short, the evidence clearly suggests Kim Jong-il was employing smart power to survive during the famine years.

#### **6.4.3 Use of Smart Power to Survive the Famine Years**

First, what were Kim's desired outcomes during the 1990s? I argue the aim of reunification became aspirational after the death of Kim Il-sung, and as the economy collapsed, Kim's primary aim was survival. There is little doubt that the 1994 Agreed Framework helped North Korea survive the famine years by neutralizing the primary threat to its survival (i.e., the U.S.) and gaining economic concessions. Once it pursued negotiations, the U.S. had to abandon the use of UN sanctions and military force. A bonus for Kim was securing a U.S. agreement for the delivery of LWRs since it legitimized his right to a civilian nuclear program. As the agreement was being implemented, the U.S. was convinced Kim was pursuing an alternative nuclear program at Kumchang-ri. The U.S. was proven wrong and was manipulated to provide additional food aid, but despite the incident, U.S.-North Korea relations improved at the highest levels. As a result, Vice Marshal Jo met with President Clinton in the oval office and Secretary Albright met with Kim in Pyongyang.

Second, which forms of power behavior did Kim prefer in the 1990s and third, what resources were available to implement his strategy? Once North

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<sup>104</sup> Chinoy, *Meltdown*, p. 32.

<sup>105</sup> Albright, *Madam Secretary*, pp. 466-469.

<sup>106</sup> McEachern, *Inside the Red Box*, pp. 132-134.

<sup>107</sup> Albright, *Madam Secretary*, p. 459.

Korea manufactured the first nuclear crisis to bring the U.S. to the negotiating table, it used its experienced diplomats to persuade their U.S. counterparts that their primary aim was to normalize relations with the U.S. At the same time, elements of the KPA and the KWP were used as negotiating leverage to pressure the U.S. to accept many of their demands. In spite of the plausible use of deception at Kumchang-ri, once the agreement was made, North Korea used high-level diplomacy to achieve its aims. This included active participation by one of the most senior KPA generals and the Supreme Leader himself. In exchange for normalizing relations, they offered to address all of the U.S.' security concerns about North Korea. This strategy was very effective in securing the first nuclear deal and to build trust between the two sides. In the end, it bought Kim more time to ensure his survival and legitimize his rule.

Fourth, what was Kim's assessment of the likelihood of success? North Korea had manufactured its first nuclear crisis but once President Carter intervened to defuse the crisis the probability of success increased as long as Pyongyang was willing to address Washington's concerns about its nascent nuclear program. North Korean diplomats worked closely with their U.S. counterparts to convince them that they were serious about negotiating a nuclear deal with the U.S. but successfully argued that unless the U.S. showed some flexibility the KPA and the KWP would oppose the deal. They correctly assumed U.S. priority was to eliminate the growing nuclear threat from North Korea and de-escalating the nuclear crisis in Korea. Despite Seoul's concerns over being left out of the talks, Pyongyang did not view Seoul as a major obstacle to negotiating a deal with the U.S. Once the two sides overcame the tensions resulting from the Kumchang-ri incident, North Korea seemed to realize high-level engagement would improve the likelihood of success. It almost persuaded Clinton to visit Pyongyang to resolve the missile issue.

Fifth, what were the policy preferences of key actors during the crisis? North Korea appeared to have made several concessions, the most important being the freeze of their nuclear programs, but the perception of the outcomes was that North Korea had won the negotiations. For instance, Dick Cheney

later opposed the second nuclear deal with Pyongyang because he believed North Korea had pocketed Washington's concessions (i.e., security assurances, shipments of heavy fuel oil, and provision of LWRs) while it continued to develop its nuclear weapons. This came about because Pyongyang carefully orchestrated the perception of policy divergence in Pyongyang among its key institutions to exercise smart power. Some observers began to argue the Agreed Framework and subsequent agreements with North Korea indicated that "once the North's leadership had made such a decision, the general pattern was for the talks to move steadily toward resolution."<sup>108</sup>

This set the stage for normalization of U.S.-North Korea relations,<sup>109</sup> and Clinton was given much of the credit for creating the "momentum of engagement" with Pyongyang.<sup>110</sup> The key was Clinton's decision to coexist with Pyongyang and his ability to persuade the Kim regime he was serious about normalization.<sup>111</sup> After he left office, Clinton lamented to Kim Dae-jung, "If I had one more year in office, the fate of the Korean Peninsula would have been different."<sup>112</sup> What the evidence thus far suggests is that Pyongyang carefully orchestrated a smart power strategy to build trust and persuade Washington it was a credible negotiating partner, despite the coercive elements of its strategy.

In sum, the evidence shows that by almost any measure Kim Jong-il and his elites had demonstrated that they were fully capable of exercising leadership and effective smart power strategies to change the initial preferences of the U.S. They accomplished this primarily through the use of high-level negotiations and engagements to shape U.S. policymakers' ideas and beliefs about the regime and its leadership as well. That said, the 1994 agreement may have prevented another war on the Peninsula, and halted the construction

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<sup>108</sup> Robert Carlin and John W. Lewis, "Negotiating with North Korea: 1992-2007," Center for International Security and Cooperation, January 2008, p. 3.

<sup>109</sup> Carlin and Lewis, "Negotiating with North Korea: 1992-2007," pp. 5-6.

<sup>110</sup> Kim Jiyul, "Strategic Culture of the Republic of Korea," *Contemporary Security Policy*, 2014, pp. 14-15.

<sup>111</sup> Carlin and Lewis, "Negotiating with North Korea: 1992-2007," p. 21.

<sup>112</sup> Lim, *Peacemaker*, p. 255.

of two larger North Korean nuclear reactors.<sup>113</sup> In other words, Pyongyang also had to give up something to receive U.S. concessions, and this actually helped to establish some level of trust between the two sides before the end of the Clinton administration. The South Koreans were troubled they were not included in the negotiations but settled for Pyongyang's reluctant agreement to hold inter-Korean talks. The question is how would the North Koreans respond to President George Bush's hardline stance toward Pyongyang in early 2000s?

## **6.5 Kim's Continued Use of Smart Power during the Bush Years**

I have thus far shown how Pyongyang used smart power in the 1990s to survive the famine years by manufacturing nuclear and missile crises during the Clinton administration. However, before I discuss how Kim persuaded former President Bush to change his initial policy preferences and exploited Seoul's Sunshine Policy, I will examine North Korean institutions that were assisting Kim in the development and implementation of smart power strategy.

### **6.5.1 The OGD and Kim's Other Smart Power Institutions**

According to recent revelations from Jang Jin-sung, a high-level North Korean defector from the United Front Department (UFD), the UFD was responsible for producing Pyongyang's smart power strategy vis-à-vis South Korea<sup>114</sup> as the institution responsible for "all matters related to South Korea."<sup>115</sup> According to Jang, Kim was "slowly losing his iron grip over the people" by 1999, but South Korea's Sunshine Policy saved his regime. He claims Pyongyang initially viewed the Sunshine Policy as "*soft-power tactics*" to cause systemic collapse, but Kim directed the UFD to develop "a 'Sunshine Exploitation' strategy" to "extract much-needed economic benefits from South Korea while making as few concessions as possible." As we shall see, the support of the Sunshine Policy in mid-1998 from the North Korea-born CEO of Hyundai, Jung Joo-young, helped to legitimize the two Koreas' engagement.

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<sup>113</sup> Cha, *The Impossible State*, pp. 254-255.

<sup>114</sup> Jang, *Dear Leader*, pp. 252-258.

<sup>115</sup> Jang, *Dear Leader*, p. 15.

The UFD mobilized all of its resources,<sup>116</sup> including extremely sensitive information about the South,<sup>117</sup> to develop a mixed strategy of engagement on land to extract aid and use military provocations along the NLL “as a bargaining chip” by “offering to cease provocations.”<sup>118</sup>

In other words, UFD developed North Korea’s smart power strategy in response to the South’s Sunshine Policy, and the threat of provocations along the NLL was surprisingly intended to ensure the sustainment of Seoul’s largesse. The first naval engagement of Yeonpyeong on June 15, 1999, initiated the hard power element of the strategy and the second NLL clash during the World Cup in June 2002 attempted to internationalize the strategy but also portrayed the clash as “an accident.”<sup>119</sup> In addition to the UFD, Jang claims there are five other important organizations essential to Kim’s survival. They are the OGD (as discussed), the Propaganda and Agitation Department<sup>120</sup> (where Kim Jong-il learned how to use the art of propaganda to control his people),<sup>121</sup> Office 38 (manages Kim’s money),<sup>122</sup> Office 35 (collects intelligence overseas), and the Ministry of State Security (physically controls those who cannot be controlled by propaganda and monopoly control of information). One can envisage how the OGD, which Jang describes as “Kim Jong-il’s executive chain of command, *which sits above the constitution and has unrestricted jurisdiction to intervene in any sphere*,” played a significant role in the development of Kim’s smart power strategies.<sup>123</sup> As discussed earlier, this seems to suggest Kim may have been using supporting and delegating

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<sup>116</sup> Jang, *Dear Leader*, pp. 252-258.

<sup>117</sup> Jang, *Dear Leader*, pp. 8-11.

<sup>118</sup> Jang, *Dear Leader*, pp. 252-258.

<sup>119</sup> Jang, *Dear Leader*, pp. 252-258.

<sup>120</sup> Jang, *Dear Leader*, p. 15.

<sup>121</sup> Jang, *Dear Leader*, p. 3.

<sup>122</sup> Other sources identify office 39 as the organization that manages the private funds of the Kim family. See I Tudor and Pearson, *North Korea Confidential*, pp. 92-93. Still other source mention that both office 38 and 39 managed the illicit and licit funds of the Kim family and office 38 had merged with office 39 in the fall of 2009 but was resumed independent operation in March 2010. see <https://nkleadershipwatch.wordpress.com/2010/06/22/the-restoration-of-office-38/> (accessed 16 May 2015).

<sup>123</sup> Jang, *Dear Leader*, p. 15.

leadership styles with the OGD (and perhaps others) to effectively manage his smart power strategy. The question is who works in these organizations?

Similar to Jang, who was the only one of the six ultra-elite North Korean poets working for the UFD, and was “admitted” to Kim Jong-il’s innermost circle for writing an “epic poem” about the Military-First Policy, one can imagine others in these core organizations achieving similar status for the key roles they play in the regime’s survival. According to Jang, once someone achieves the status of the admitted, it guarantees “a privilege of immunity that was powerful beyond imagination: not even the highest authorities of the DPRK could investigate, prosecute, or harm one of the Admitted.” The only way the admitted could be purged was for “treason and for the Organization and Guidance Department to receive explicit permission from Kim Jong-il himself.” In other words, those in the OGD were the only ones who had the power to eliminate the innermost core of the elite and were almost untouchable since they answered only to the Kims and had the prerogative to intervene in any sphere of state affairs.<sup>124</sup>



**Figure 6.4.** Choe Ryong-hae giving guidance at an unknown facility, which suggests some core elites, had delegated authority to issue guidance and direction.  
<https://www.nknews.org/2014/05/not-likely-that-choe-purged-according-to-sk-ministry/>

<sup>124</sup> Jang, *Dear Leader*, pp. 15-19.

As a result, it is conceivable that many of North Korea's best and brightest work in key institutions required for regime survival, who are also "loyal and fearless"<sup>125</sup> and led by Kim Jong-il, and who are supported by the OGD and other core institutions to develop and implement effective smart power strategies. What this suggests is that totalitarian control<sup>126</sup> alone does not guarantee regime survival; it must also have a strategy to deal with the outside world. This also means that within the core elite there must be some personnel who are intellectually capable of developing effective smart power strategies and exercising some delegated authority. (see Figure 6.4). For example, U.S. Ambassador Christopher Hill described Kim Kye-kwan, his North Korean counterpart at the 6PT, as "intelligent, and self-confident, and thoughtful" during their encounters. However, Hill speculated that Kim may have appeared so because he did not have to rely on prepared talking points; he had been on the job for over a decade and could have memorized all the talking points. In short, Hill could not imagine Kim offering his own thoughts or deviating from pre-approved negotiating positions from Pyongyang<sup>127</sup> but still made the point to emphasize how Kim debunked the perception North Korean diplomats were "robotlike negotiators."<sup>128</sup> I argue it is more likely Kim chose not to refer to his talking points because he had mastered the nuclear issues from Pyongyang's perspective over a long period of time and was empowered to convey them to others. His expertise helped Pyongyang secure the best deal and survive.

### **6.5.2 Kim's Use of Smart Power vis-à-vis U.S. Allies**

I will now examine how North Korea remained defiant during the Bush administration by manipulating U.S. policy divergence with allies and partners in Northeast Asia, and policy incoherence within the U.S. interagency. Ultimately, Pyongyang secured a second nuclear agreement with the U.S. in September

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<sup>125</sup> Jang, *Dear Leader*, p. 3.

<sup>126</sup> Jager, *Brothers at War*, p. 462.

<sup>127</sup> Christopher R. Hill, *Outpost, Life on the Frontlines of American Diplomacy: A Memoir* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2014), p. 217.

<sup>128</sup> Hill, *Outpost, Life on the Frontlines of American Diplomacy*, p. 229.

2005,<sup>129</sup> despite ignoring international warnings not to expand its nuclear arsenal and proliferate nuclear technology. North Korea also ignored U.S. concerns about its covert uranium enrichment capability to provide a second path for producing nuclear weapons. This outcome is puzzling since President Bush unceremoniously rolled out his hardline toward Pyongyang during his first meeting with South Korean President Kim Dae-jung in March 2001. During the meeting, Kim pitched his rationale for the Sunshine Policy by emphasizing engagement was the best way to address the threat from Pyongyang. Bush apparently interrupted Kim to express his doubts about negotiating with North Korea and made it clear he loathed Kim Jong-il. Moreover, during the press event with reporters, Bush referred to Kim as “this man,” which most South Koreans found “disrespectful and offensive.” Indeed, Kim later said Bush “humiliated me by calling me ‘this man’.” Secretary Powell described the meeting with the South Korean president as a fiasco and it set a negative tone for U.S.-South Korea relations for several years.<sup>130</sup> How did this occur?

#### **6.5.2.1 The Sunshine Policy and Policy Divergence with Bush**

The North Korean famine beginning in the mid-1990s gradually changed South Korean perceptions of North Korea; it humanized their brethren in the North and they were no longer viewed automatically as a threat. North Korea gradually managed to re-shape the ideas and beliefs about it in the South. This made it possible for politicians like Kim Dae-jung to pursue an open-ended engagement with Pyongyang.<sup>131</sup> Kim’s Sunshine Policy of engagement gained momentum even after North Korea launched a Taepodong missile over Japan in August 1998. As mentioned earlier, the launch concerned Washington, and also troubled Tokyo, but Seoul dismissed it as a mere demonstration meant to rally domestic support behind Kim.<sup>132</sup> Nevertheless, the Sunshine Policy would be tested along the NLL when KPA patrol boats crossed it 52 times from June 7

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<sup>129</sup> Oberdorfer and Carlin, *The Two Koreas*, p. 406.

<sup>130</sup> Chinoy, *Meltdown*, pp. 56-59.

<sup>131</sup> Robinson, *Korea’s Twentieth-Century Odyssey*, pp. 179-180.

<sup>132</sup> Kirk, *Korea Betrayed*, pp. 151-153.



to 14, 1999. This predictably led to an armed clash on June 15, in which an estimated 17 to 30 North Koreans were killed and at least one KPA patrol boat was sunk. The South Koreans had nine sailors wounded and some of their ships were damaged during the skirmish.<sup>133</sup> Kim Dae-jung argued his strong response during the incident demonstrated his approach was not an appeasement policy.<sup>134</sup>

Why would Kim Jong-il escalate tensions along the NLL when Seoul was clearly trying to engage Pyongyang? Seoul believed the NLL incident occurred because the KPA was trying to meet its crab quota, which had doubled, to earn foreign currency.<sup>135</sup> As noted earlier, the UFD developed a sunshine exploitation strategy to extract maximum concessions from Seoul while offering as little as possible.<sup>136</sup> The timely visit to North Korea by Hyundai founder Jung Joo-young led to food aid from the South and the international community.<sup>137</sup> The South chose not to escalate, and under Kim Dae-Jung it provided 950,000 tons of fertilizer and 1.14 million tons of food aid.<sup>138</sup> Seoul established trust with Pyongyang,<sup>139</sup> but may have taught it to rely on military provocations along the NLL as an integral part of its foreign policy strategy.<sup>140</sup> As one would suspect, the North Korean leadership viewed the results as a “phenomenal success” of its sunshine exploitation policy.<sup>141</sup> This was not achieved by chance or luck.

North Korea continued to use high-level engagements and attenuated the use of hard and soft power to influence key players in Northeast Asia. Despite the escalation of tensions along the NLL, Pyongyang knew when to support the Sunshine Policy. For example, it suspended the launch of a Taepodong missile in September 1999, after rolling it out onto the launch pad for all to see. North Korea also empowered Lim Dong-won, South Korea’s

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<sup>133</sup> Michishita, *North Korea’s Military-Diplomatic Campaigns*, pp. 145-147.

<sup>134</sup> Lim, *Peacemaker*, pp. 226-227.

<sup>135</sup> Lim, *Peacemaker*, p. 226.

<sup>136</sup> Jang, *Dear Leader*, p. 254.

<sup>137</sup> Jang, *Dear Leader*, pp. 254-257.

<sup>138</sup> Lim, *Peacemaker*, p. 242.

<sup>139</sup> Lim, *Peacemaker*, p. 267.

<sup>140</sup> Jang, *Dear Leader*, pp. 258-259.

<sup>141</sup> Jang, *Dear Leader*, pp. 258-259.

Minister of Unification, who was originally from the North, by embracing him as a key interlocutor in fulfilling the Sunshine Policy with Pyongyang. When Lim visited Pyongyang in 1991 to promote Korean reconciliation under South Korean President Roh Tae-woo, the North Koreans arranged a meeting with Lim's "long-lost sister," and that reportedly shaped his positive view of the Sunshine Policy.<sup>142</sup> They co-opted Jung Joo-young as well, who was also from the North, and envisioned the inter-Korean summit through him in December 1998.<sup>143</sup> Lim became the architect of the Sunshine Policy,<sup>144</sup> and followed up with the North Koreans to finalize the deal for the 2000 inter-Korean summit.<sup>145</sup>



**Figure 6.5.** South Korean President Kim Dae-jung links hands with North Korean leader Kim Jong-il during a farewell luncheon after the North-South summit in Pyongyang on June 15, 2000. <http://www.abc.net.au/news/image/1395274-3x2-940x627.jpg>

According to Lim, the summit resulted in significant confidence-building measures that would eventually lead to peace on the Korean Peninsula. They

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<sup>142</sup> Kirk, *Korea Betrayed*, pp. 155-157.

<sup>143</sup> Jang, *Dear Leader*, pp. 155-157.

<sup>144</sup> Lim, *Peacemaker*, p. ix.

<sup>145</sup> Kirk, *Korea Betrayed*, pp. 155-157.

included the establishment of a hotline, several reunions of separated families from the Korean War, North-South ministerial meetings, cultural exchanges, suspension of psychological operations along the DMZ, development of the Kaesong Industrial Complex (KIC), tours to Mount Kumgang, and the removal of landmines to open two corridors within the DMZ.<sup>146</sup> These outcomes suggest the North Koreans can be meticulous in their attempts to acquire the contextual intelligence necessary to develop successful smart power strategies. Having said that, one has to wonder why Bush accepted another nuclear agreement with Pyongyang in September 2005 after declaring he “didn’t trust North Korea to honor any nonproliferation agreement” and pledged not to have dialogue with Pyongyang.<sup>147</sup> How did Kim change Bush’s hardline policy position?

In March 2001, Bush made it clear that Clinton’s policy of engagement had failed, and “North Korea would have to change its behavior before America made concessions.”<sup>148</sup> Condoleezza Rice, then National Security Advisor, apparently believed the Sunshine Policy came close to appeasement of North Korea and Kim Dae-jung’s “largesse was helping to prop up the regime.”<sup>149</sup> When former Secretary of State Colin Powell indicated to the press that the Bush administration was willing to negotiate with Pyongyang, Bush was “stunned” and forced him to issue a reclamation.<sup>150</sup> Powell later stated, “I had to go out and in an embarrassing way to say to the press, ‘well, you know we’ll study it’.”<sup>151</sup> This was “a bad omen”<sup>152</sup> for the Bush administration.<sup>153</sup>

Bush’s “Axis of Evil” speech in January 2002 caused alarm when many interpreted the phrase as a prelude to regime change in Iran, Iraq, and North Korea.<sup>154</sup> As expected, North Korea expressed its displeasure and warned that the KPA was “firmly determined not to allow any aggressors to dare invade the

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<sup>146</sup> Lim, *Peacemaker*, pp. 231-246.

<sup>147</sup> Karen DeYoung, *Soldier, The Life of Colin Powell* (New York: Vintage Books, 2006), p. 325.

<sup>148</sup> Bush, *Decision Points*, pp. 90-91.

<sup>149</sup> Rice, *No Higher Honor*, p. 36.

<sup>150</sup> Bush, *Decision Points*, pp. 90-91.

<sup>151</sup> Chinoy, *Meltdown*, p. 55.

<sup>152</sup> DeYoung, *Soldier*, p. 325.

<sup>153</sup> Rice, *No Higher Honor*, p. 37.

<sup>154</sup> Rice, *No Higher Honor*, pp. 150-151.

inviolable territory of our country but wipe them out to the last one at the risk of their lives.”<sup>155</sup> Seoul also interpreted the speech as U.S. declaratory policy to bring “down North Korea through military ‘preemption’ and ‘regime change’.”<sup>156</sup> However, when Bush visited South Korea shortly after the speech, he toned down his rhetoric and stated the U.S. “had no intention of invading or attacking North Korea.” Kim Dae-jung also persuaded Bush not to use the Axis of Evil moniker during his public remarks and encouraged talks with Pyongyang.<sup>157</sup> By August 2002, North Korea was using its UN office in New York to approach Leon Sigal, a former *New York Times* reporter,<sup>158</sup> to convey its desire to address U.S. security concerns if Washington would end its hostile policy.<sup>159</sup> (see Appendix C for how North Korea perceives U.S. hostile policy). The North was reaching out to informal contacts in the U.S. that they trusted to deliver indirect messages to the U.S. government.

#### **6.5.2.2 The Japanese Abductee Issue and Miscalculation**

As the U.S. continued to mull over its strategy for North Korea, the CIA warned in September 2002 that it had detected “Pyongyang’s covert program to produce highly enriched uranium.”<sup>160</sup> Meanwhile, Prime Minister Koizumi Junichiro of Japan visited North Korea for his first summit with Kim Jong-il on September 17, 2002, with the hope of normalizing relations with Pyongyang.<sup>161</sup> (see Figure 6.6). The Japanese had been coordinating with the North Koreans since late 2001 in Beijing but they were also meeting them secretly in New York.<sup>162</sup> The plan was for Koizumi to issue “an apology for the ‘unfortunate past’ and financial incentives were to be part of the deal.” However, during the summit Kim responded with his own apology for abducting Japanese citizens.

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<sup>155</sup> Chinoy, *Meltdown*, p. 72.

<sup>156</sup> Lim, *Peacemaker*, pp. 288-289.

<sup>157</sup> Chinoy, *Meltdown*, pp. 74-75.

<sup>158</sup> Cha, *The Impossible State*, p. 276.

<sup>159</sup> Chinoy, *Meltdown*, p. 106.

<sup>160</sup> George Tenet with Bill Harlow, *At the Center of the Storm, My Years at the CIA* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2007), p. 319.

<sup>161</sup> Rice, *No Higher Honor*, pp. 160-161.

<sup>162</sup> Charles L. Pritchard, *Failed Diplomacy: The Tragic Story of How North Korea Got the Bomb* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2007), p. 87. Pritchard is also known as “Jack.”

According to Alexis Dudden, this was a bold move for both Kim and Koizumi. Koizumi wanted to settle the matter of history with North Korea to settle things with things with Pyongyang, and Kim “clearly understood that political apologies were the name of the game” and offered regret for the eight dead abductees.<sup>163</sup>



**Figure 6.6.** North Korean leader Kim Jong-il shakes hands with Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi in September 2002. <http://nypost.com/2016/01/10/how-north-korea-kidnapped-hundreds-brainwashed-them-into-spies/>

Both Kim and Koizumi miscalculated the potential reaction by the Japanese public. It appears that Koizumi assumed the resolution of the nuclear issue would help him overcome the sensitive abductee issue, and Kim also failed to grasp how emotional the abductee issue would be in Japan. Kim might have been enticed to come clean on the abductions to obtain \$5 to 10 billion in Japanese aid.<sup>164</sup> Kim’s claim that only five Japanese were alive and many of their graves were lost during heavy storms was unacceptable to the

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<sup>163</sup> Dudden, *Troubled Apologies*, pp. 50-55.

<sup>164</sup> Chinoy, *Meltdown*, pp. 96-111.

Japanese.<sup>165</sup> On the other hand, Dudden argued that Kim may have been “misguided” when he issued the apology but it was “an attempt to generate legitimacy for himself abroad and at home.” He sought international legitimacy with the unexpected apology for the abductions and legitimacy at home by expanding his nuclear programs and defying the U.S.<sup>166</sup>

After the summit, the Japanese focused solely on the abduction issue despite the growing nuclear threat from Pyongyang. It did so because the Japanese government and the media had been ignoring the abductee families’ pleas for assistance, and Kim’s revelation highlighted the fact that both had failed to protect their own people against North Korean agents. Tokyo had little choice but to exploit the incident to summon “the myth of Japanese togetherness.” However, for most Koreans, the Japanese reaction to the North Korean abductions made little sense since they have “yet to deal with the tragic stories of the millions of Asian lives ruined by the forced separation and abductions perpetrated by its colonial and wartime government.”<sup>167</sup> Japan’s myopic focus on the abductee issue avoids sensitive questions like “‘Why does Pyongyang hate Japan so much?’ and ‘Would Japanese cities or the U.S. military bases in Japan be North Korea’s target?’”<sup>168</sup> Thus, Kim may have been wrong about the Japanese reaction, but most Koreans were also surprised by what they perceived as Japanese over reaction considering Tokyo’s own tainted historical legacy. Kim probably believed telling the truth about the abduction scheme would help him gain some legitimacy and significant concessions from Japan. He was wrong. The public outrage in Japan compelled Tokyo to resolve the abduction issue before discussing any other issues with Pyongyang. Nonetheless, Koizumi encouraged Bush to send his envoy to Pyongyang to resolve the nuclear issue peacefully.<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> Pritchard, *Failed Diplomacy*, p. 88.

<sup>166</sup> Dudden, *Troubled Apologies*, p. 56.

<sup>167</sup> Dudden, *Troubled Apologies*, p. 56.

<sup>168</sup> Dudden, *Troubled Apologies*, p. 52.

<sup>169</sup> Rice, *No Higher Honor*, pp. 160-161.

### 6.5.2.3 The HEU Revelation in Pyongyang and U.S. Containment

Cheney and others had been arguing that states like North Korea would never give up their nuclear weapons, and called for more sanctions to hasten regime change. Rice favored the hardline position, but she recognized it would not succeed without Chinese and South Korean support. She also knew there was no support at the Pentagon for the use of force in Korea. Rice persuaded Bush after Koizumi's call to accept the North Korean invitation by sending Jim Kelly, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, to Pyongyang. She reassured Bush that Kelly would deliver a tough message and confront the North Koreans about uranium enrichment. The hardliners in the administration did not trust the State Department, and Kelly was under strict instructions to deliver only the approved talking points.<sup>170</sup>

On October 4, 2002, during Kelly's meeting with First Vice Foreign Minister Kang Sok-ju, who was the lead negotiator for the 1994 agreement,<sup>171</sup> Kang reportedly "admitted to having a covert uranium enrichment program." When Kelly's team sent a cable to Washington from the British Embassy in Pyongyang,<sup>172</sup> the Highly Enriched Uranium (HEU) revelation was leaked to the media and the U.S. decided to halt the shipment of heavy fuel oil to Pyongyang.<sup>173</sup> On October 25, 2002, North Korea's Central News Agency (KCNA) announced that Kelly accused Pyongyang of a covert HEU program "without producing any evidence," and claimed it "suffered a loss of electricity" because the U.S. failed to provide the LWRs after eight years of construction. In other words, North Korea was accusing the U.S. of failing to live up to the Agreed Framework, and therefore it "was entitled to possess not only nuclear weapons but any type of weapon more powerful than that, so as to defend its sovereignty and right to existence from the ever-growing nuclear threat by the United States."<sup>174</sup>

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<sup>170</sup> Rice, *No Higher Honor*, pp. 159-163.

<sup>171</sup> Chinoy, *Meltdown*, p. 120.

<sup>172</sup> Chinoy, *Meltdown*, pp. 124-125.

<sup>173</sup> Rice, *No Higher Honor*, pp. 162-163.

<sup>174</sup> Lim, *Peacemaker*, p. 342.

The day after the KCNA report, Bush reaffirmed during an Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) meeting in Mexico that the U.S. would not attack or invade North Korea. Bush believed Kim confessed because the U.S. was serious and “he needs assistance from the United States.” Nevertheless, Bush indicated talks were out of the question due to the revelation of Pyongyang’s HEU program.<sup>175</sup> Some argued Bush and Cheney decided to overlook the North Korean nuclear problem until they “dealt with Iraq.”<sup>176</sup> As the invasion of Iraq loomed, Pyongyang continued to signal its willingness to return to the negotiating table.<sup>177</sup> On November 2, 2002, the North Koreans invited former Ambassador Donald Gregg and former reporter Don Oberdorfer to Pyongyang to find a way to engage the U.S. After discussions with Vice Foreign Minister Kim Kye-kwan and KPA Lieutenant General Li Chan-bok, Gregg and Oberdorfer met with Kang Sok-ju. Kang claimed he had just come from a meeting with Kim Jong-il and wanted to convey Kim’s personal letter to President Bush. According to Kang, Kim’s letter stated that if the U.S. recognized North Korea’s sovereignty and provided security assurances, the two countries should be able to resolve the nuclear crisis. If Bush was willing to make “a bold decision,” Kim was willing to do the same.<sup>178</sup> When Gregg and Oberdorfer returned to Washington, they met with then Deputy National Security Advisor Stephen Hadley, delivered Kim Jong-il’s letter, and suggested this was a “golden opportunity” to engage Pyongyang. Hadley was not receptive and Bush never responded to the letter.<sup>179</sup> Although North Korea continued to engage through informal channels to influence U.S. officials, the tactic failed. More importantly, the readout from the Kelly trip to North Korea effectively ended the 1994 Agreed Framework, and the NSC adopted a policy

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<sup>175</sup> Lim, *Peacemaker*, pp. 343-345.

<sup>176</sup> Peter Baker, *Days of Fire: Bush and Cheney in the White House* (New York: Doubleday, 2013), p. 227.

<sup>177</sup> Chinoy, *Meltdown*, p. 128.

<sup>178</sup> Chinoy, *Meltdown*, pp. 133-136.

<sup>179</sup> Chinoy, *Meltdown*, pp. 133-136.



called “tailored containment,” which meant the U.S. would exert more pressure to change the behavior of the Kim regime.<sup>180</sup>

According to Mohamed Elbaradei, former Director General of the IAEA, Pyongyang responded by requesting the IAEA remove its seals and monitoring equipment as well as its inspectors from Yongbyon after the heavy fuel oil shipments ceased in late 2002. This signified the last obligation that was met in accordance with the Agreed Framework. Pyongyang continued to escalate by withdrawing from the NPT on January 10, 2003, took steps to restart the reactor, and began reprocessing its spent fuel. Elbaradei claimed the IAEA informed the UN Security Council (UNSC) about the situation in the North, but it failed to take action due to the coming war with Iraq.<sup>181</sup> At this point, the prospect of North Korea producing a nuclear bomb and eventually developing a capability to threaten regional allies and possibly the U.S. had become “a distinct possibility.”<sup>182</sup> When Pyongyang’s informal attempts to reach out to the U.S. failed and the U.S. began to increase pressure on the regime, the North continued its smart power attempts to influence U.S. policy preferences.

Despite its actions against the IAEA, Pyongyang continued to reach out to the U.S. by contacting former New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson through its UN office in late December 2002. As the crisis appeared to worsen in January 2003, Powell approved of Richardson’s meeting with the North Koreans in New Mexico. After the meeting, Richardson was certain Pyongyang was attempting to improve relations with the U.S. and was ready to make a deal. According to Mike Chinoy, the Bush administration also ignored this attempt by Pyongyang to pursue engagement with the U.S.<sup>183</sup> However, former North Korea Envoy Charles Pritchard revealed that Powell asked him to reach out to the North Koreans in New York after the Richardson meeting. He was told to keep it close-hold because Powell was “a little out front on” engaging the

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<sup>180</sup> Rice, *No Higher Honor*, pp. 162-163.

<sup>181</sup> Mohamed Elbaradei, *The Age of Deception, Nuclear Diplomacy in Treacherous Times* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2011), pp. 90-92.

<sup>182</sup> Chinoy, *Meltdown*, p. 149.

<sup>183</sup> Chinoy, *Meltdown*, pp. 152-153.

North Koreans. The pointed message to Pak Gil-yon, North Korea's UN Ambassador, was that "Secretary Powell was now in charge of North Korea policy; accordingly, with respect to that policy, Pyongyang should listen only to the president and the secretary of state." Pritchard also conveyed the State Department's preference for engaging Pyongyang directly, instead of it using intermediaries like Richardson. Needless to say, Pak was confused about the mixed messages coming out of Washington.<sup>184</sup>

After the call ended, Pritchard cautioned Powell that he sensed that Pyongyang was no longer engaging in a game of brinksmanship but was preparing to "produce nuclear weapons." He reasoned that its failing economy, perceived U.S. hostile policy, and its refusal to accept bilateral talks "led them to believe regime survival was at stake." Pritchard summarized by proposing that if the U.S. were to offer "a security guarantee or nonaggression pact, from their [North Korean] point of view it would serve the same objective: security and regime survival." In short, Pritchard believed time was running out on preventing a nuclear breakout by Pyongyang, but if the State Department acted quickly it could stop North Korea from acquiring nuclear weapons.<sup>185</sup> This suggests that at least some in the Bush administration were beginning to be persuaded by Pyongyang's efforts to negotiate directly with the U.S.

As the discussion between the U.S. and the North Koreans continued, Kelly asked David Straub, the State Department's Director for Korean Affairs, to fax three paragraphs of the relevant text of the President's State of the Union Address to the North Korean delegation in New York as a gesture of good will.<sup>186</sup> Again, it demonstrated that the State Department's Asia hands were aligned with the North Koreans in their preference for negotiations. During his State of the Union Address on January 28, 2003, Bush declared, "The North Korean regime is using its nuclear program to incite fear and seek concessions.

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<sup>184</sup> Pritchard, *Failed Diplomacy*, pp. 57-59.

<sup>185</sup> Pritchard, *Failed Diplomacy*, pp. 57-59.

<sup>186</sup> Pritchard, *Failed Diplomacy*, pp. 59-61.

America and the world will not be blackmailed.”<sup>187</sup> He continued to send mixed signals by also stating the U.S. was seeking a peaceful solution and “the North Korean regime will find respect in the world and revival for its people only when it turns away from its nuclear ambitions.”<sup>188</sup> However, with the U.S. invasion of Iraq looming, the U.S. deployed bombers, fighters, and an aircraft carrier to Korea and the Western Pacific, seemingly sending a not so subtle message to Pyongyang. When Secretary Rumsfeld declared the U.S. was pulling back its combat troops from the DMZ, it caused alarm in Seoul. Many South Koreans feared “a U.S. preemptive strike on North Korea.”<sup>189</sup> The North Korean Foreign Ministry declared the U.S. “is the *only* party who is threatening our sovereignty and our right to survival, and it alone has the responsibility and ability to remove the danger.”<sup>190</sup>

While on his way to Seoul for the South Korean presidential inauguration, Powell stopped in Beijing to propose that Beijing host the Five Party Talks with North Korea, including the two Koreas, the U.S., China, and Japan. He proceeded to Seoul without a Chinese response.<sup>191</sup> As President Kim Dae-jung left office in February 2003, his successor Roh Moo-hyun embraced the Sunshine Policy and sympathized with Pyongyang’s position that its nuclear ambition was a deterrent for a possible U.S. attack. The call for diplomacy resonated in Japan as well and Koizumi sought another summit with Kim Jong-il, and expressed concern about the U.S.’s tailored containment strategy. As North Korea abrogated the Agreed Framework, Koizumi stated, “If you read the North Korean announcement carefully, their consistent stance is to seek a peaceful resolution.” Koizumi continued to use his influence with Bush to moderate the U.S. approach with Pyongyang.<sup>192</sup> While Pyongyang failed to make progress with the hardliners in the U.S., it successfully shaped South Korean and Japanese perceptions to align with its own policy preferences.

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<sup>187</sup> Chinoy, *Meltdown*, pp. 159-160.

<sup>188</sup> Pritchard, *Failed Diplomacy*, p. 61.

<sup>189</sup> Chinoy, *Meltdown*, pp. 159-163.

<sup>190</sup> Lim, *Peacemaker*, p. 354.

<sup>191</sup> Pritchard, *Failed Diplomacy*, p. 62.

<sup>192</sup> Chinoy, *Meltdown*, pp. 155-156.

According to Robert Carlin and John Lewis, China could no longer sit on the sidelines. It feared Pyongyang's withdrawal from the NPT signalled resumption of its nuclear weapons program, and the escalation of tensions between the U.S. and North Korea over the HEU issue could spiral out of control to threaten its borders.<sup>193</sup> China urged North Korea to de-escalate, and reportedly stopped its oil shipment for three days. Simultaneously, Chinese leaders urged moderation with Powell and Bush, but Bush continued to resist bilateral talks with Pyongyang.<sup>194</sup> Meanwhile, China sent its Vice Premier to North Korea in early March to float the idea of Powell's Five Party Talks. When North Korea refused to participate, Vice Premier Qian Qichen countered with a suggestion for trilateral talks among the U.S., China, and North Korea.<sup>195</sup>

The North Koreans met with Prichard and Straub in New York on March 31, 2003, and warned they were building a nuclear deterrent because of the U.S. invasion of Iraq. However, the State Department chose not to share this information with the White House and the rest of the interagency because it believed the revelation would negatively affect the resumption of talks with Pyongyang.<sup>196</sup> This indicated some in the State Department judged conveying North Korean threats would hurt their efforts to resume negotiations and were willing to risk a backlash from the hardliners in Washington. Prichard indicated, "Pyongyang continued to request bilateral talks through the U.S.-DPRK New York channel," and the various coordination efforts in New York, Beijing, and Pyongyang resulted in the Trilateral Talks by mid-April 2003.<sup>197</sup> Pritchard subsequently noted that China requested that Washington use Beijing as the primary channel of communications with Pyongyang, and that signalled China's readiness to assume the leading role in denuclearizing North Korea.<sup>198</sup>

When Bush and others discovered Powell withheld information about North Korea's threat to build nuclear weapons, Bush and Rice lost confidence in

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<sup>193</sup> Carlin and Lewis, "Negotiating with North Korea: 1992-2007," p. 14.

<sup>194</sup> Chinoy, *Meltdown*, pp. 164-167.

<sup>195</sup> Pritchard, *Failed Diplomacy*, p. 62.

<sup>196</sup> Chinoy, *Meltdown*, pp. 164-167.

<sup>197</sup> Pritchard, *Failed Diplomacy*, p. 62.

<sup>198</sup> Pritchard, *Failed Diplomacy*, pp. 62-63.

the State Department and sought more control over North Korea policy.<sup>199</sup> When the U.S. delegation met with Assistant Secretary Kelly on April 17 to discuss the upcoming trilateral meeting, the hardliners opposed any bilateral discussions with the North Koreans, and Pritchard resigned on April 18, 2003.<sup>200</sup> On the same day, the KCNA disclosed Pyongyang was having success in reprocessing its spent fuel rods but, when it realized it may have overreached, the North Koreans revised the statement by suggesting that the final preparatory phase before reprocessing had been completed. This seems to indicate Pyongyang is capable of realizing the contextual intelligence necessary to achieve successful outcomes. This adjustment in the statement was apparently ambiguous enough to persuade all three parties to attend the talks in Beijing on April 23, 2003. The head of the North Korean delegation stated Pyongyang was ready to “dismantle” its nuclear program, open its nuclear facilities to inspectors, and stop selling its missiles. However, the North Koreans demanded “normalized relations, economic aid, security guarantees, and a nonaggression pact.” When Kelly deployed only his approved talking points, the North Koreans indicated they already had nuclear weapons, and whether they tested or exported them would depend on U.S. actions.<sup>201</sup>

President Bush characterized these comments by the North Koreans as blackmail, and called for strengthening missile defense. Rumsfeld later convinced the Senate to support the acquisition of “‘bunker busting’ nuclear weapons” to target underground facilities in North Korea.<sup>202</sup> The U.S. also continued to increase its efforts to pressure North Korea. The U.S. initiated the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) to target North Korea’s illicit trafficking of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and missiles. These efforts to pressure Pyongyang probably reinforced the idea that Washington was still targeting North Korea and demonstrated Pyongyang’s strategy was not working with Bush and the hardliners. However, it achieved some success when China and

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<sup>199</sup> Chinoy, *Meltdown*, p. 167.

<sup>200</sup> Pritchard, *Failed Diplomacy*, pp. 63-65.

<sup>201</sup> Chinoy, *Meltdown*, pp. 167-174.

<sup>202</sup> Chinoy, *Meltdown*, pp. 173-174.

South Korea refused to join the PSI effort.<sup>203</sup> According to Chinoy, North Korea's UN representatives met again with Pritchard (he had already resigned) and Straub on July 8, and declared they were making nuclear weapons after reprocessing 8,000 spent fuel rods.<sup>204</sup>

As the situation intensified, the Chinese attempted to influence Kim Jong-il by sending Dai Bingguo, China's Deputy Foreign Minister, to North Korea on July 12, 2003, to deliver a letter from Hu Jintao. The Chinese promised more economic aid and committed to obtaining "a promise of [U.S.] nonaggression in return for the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula." Kim's only precondition for engaging the U.S. was having meaningful dialogue. After visiting with Kim, Dai met with Rice, Powell, and Cheney, and delivered Hu's letter to Bush. Hu argued for more trilateral talks, and Powell reluctantly agreed with the condition as long as North Korea agreed to include Seoul and Tokyo later. Pyongyang then asked to include Moscow as well.<sup>205</sup> Pyongyang with Chinese support was finally making some progress in changing the initial preference of the U.S. hardliners regarding talks with North Korea.

When the North Koreans finally arrived at the 6PT on August 28, 2003, Kim Kye-kwan, their head of delegation, claimed North Korea did not seek to possess nuclear weapons. As long as the U.S. abandoned its hostile policy and stopped threatening the North, Pyongyang was prepared to dismantle its nuclear program. Kim proposed that Pyongyang give up its nuclear program in exchange for heavy fuel oil and more food aid. The North Koreans would also freeze all of their nuclear activities and allow the IAEA to perform its oversight functions, if the U.S. agreed to a nonaggression treaty and the other parties agreed to compensate them "for loss of electricity." He even offered to settle the missile issue after Pyongyang normalized relations with Washington and Tokyo. Once the LWRs were delivered, North Korea would dismantle its nuclear program, but Pyongyang denied U.S. allegations concerning its HEU

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<sup>203</sup> Chinoy, *Meltdown*, pp. 174-176.

<sup>204</sup> Chinoy, *Meltdown*, pp. 176-178.

<sup>205</sup> Chinoy, *Meltdown*, pp. 178-180.

program.<sup>206</sup> The U.S. delegation refused to accept a “give-and-take” denuclearization process and continued to demand “complete, verifiable, and irreversible dismantling” of Pyongyang’s nuclear program before it could offer any concessions.<sup>207</sup> According to Cheney, the demand for CVID symbolized the hardline position that the U.S. does not “negotiate with evil... We defeat it.”<sup>208</sup> While Kelly rejected the nonaggression treaty proposal, he cited Bush’s commitment not to invade or attack North Korea. The North Koreans warned they would respond to U.S. hostile policy with a nuclear deterrent.<sup>209</sup>

According to Lim Dong-won, the South Koreans viewed the 6PT as “a U.S. hardliner-designed scheme to form a five-state anti-North Korean front, pitting five countries against one – North Korea – to force it to surrender by pressure and isolation.”<sup>210</sup> Victor Cha seems to confirm this sentiment when he suggested that the 6PT format is better than the old one because five parties telling the North Koreans they need to abandon their nuclear weapons is “a lot more credible than one country doing so.”<sup>211</sup>

The talks ended without a Joint Statement, and the Chinese Foreign Ministry blamed the impasse on U.S. “negative policy” and its threatening posture toward North Korea. So far, Pyongyang was still able to shape Beijing’s views to align with its own policy preferences despite its threats to test a nuclear weapon. Moreover, it had not given up on its efforts to reach out to the U.S. On August 30, 2003, North Korea invited Frank Jannuzi and Keith Luse, senior staffers from the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee, to Pyongyang. When they met with Kim Kye-kwan, he characterized Kelly’s remarks at the 6PT as U.S. demands for unconditional surrender, and reminded the staffers that North Korea was not Iraq. He also warned that Washington needed to learn how to live with North Korea as a nuclear weapons state. The staffers left believing North Korea would go nuclear as soon as possible, as Pritchard had

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<sup>206</sup> Chinoy, *Meltdown*, pp. 180-186.

<sup>207</sup> Chinoy, *Meltdown*, pp. 184-186.

<sup>208</sup> Baker, *Days of Fire*, p. 313.

<sup>209</sup> Chinoy, *Meltdown*, pp. 184-186.

<sup>210</sup> Lim, *Peacemaker*, p. 356.

<sup>211</sup> Cha, *The Impossible State*, p. 259.

warned earlier. However, Kim showed some flexibility by conveying that high-level talks could resolve the issue.<sup>212</sup>

On October 11, 2003, Powell persuaded Bush to offer “a written pledge not to attack North Korea,” but he came short of agreeing to a formal nonaggression treaty. This was a “shift in emphasis” for Bush and when he mentioned this to Hu Jintao, Hu quickly dispatched a senior Party official to Pyongyang. This was the first indication that Pyongyang’s smart power strategy was working on Bush when he finally abandoned his initial preferences for engaging North Korea. North Korea continued to warn of a possible nuclear test and launched a “new cruise missile,” and the KCNA initially called Bush’s offer “shameful.” However, it soon back-paddled before the arrival of the Chinese envoy and disclosed it was willing to consider the U.S. offer. Again, this suggests Pyongyang had sufficient contextual intelligence to moderate its position to achieve successful outcomes. On October 30, 2003, Kim Jong-il agreed to return to the 6PT, but Pyongyang attempted to set the agenda for the talks by making it clear that it sought a “package solution” based on the “principle of simultaneous action.”<sup>213</sup>

North Korea offered to freeze its nuclear program on December 9, 2003, in exchange for energy assistance, lifting of economic sanctions, and de-listing it from the State Department’s list of terror-sponsoring countries. Bush ignored the offer, but China lobbied the U.S. for another round of 6PT with a proposed Joint Statement at the end of the talks. The U.S. demanded that the Joint Statement include CVID of Pyongyang’s entire nuclear program.<sup>214</sup> This was unacceptable to Pyongyang and Beijing’s effort to resume 6PT in December failed.<sup>215</sup> Nevertheless, Pyongyang was persistent in its efforts to engage the U.S. by attempting to set the agenda for the talks.

‘ In January 2004, North Korea announced that it would host another group of Americans for a visit to Yongbyon. They included John W. Lewis from

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<sup>212</sup> Chinoy, *Meltdown*, pp. 187-189.

<sup>213</sup> Chinoy, *Meltdown*, pp. 191-193.

<sup>214</sup> Chinoy, *Meltdown*, pp. 194-197.

<sup>215</sup> Chinoy, *Meltdown*, pp. 194-197.



Stanford, Senate staffers Jannuzi and Luse, U.S. nuclear scientist Siegfried Hecker, and the recently retired Jack Pritchard. Kim Kye-kwan informed the group Pyongyang was hoping to achieve a breakthrough by demonstrating transparency at Yongbyon. The group was shown empty canisters in the storage pond, and then taken to a reprocessing facility where North Korean nuclear scientists provided a jar of weapons-grade plutonium. During the discussions, they made it clear the KPA already possessed a nuclear weapon. The American visitors were convinced Pyongyang was serious, but when they informed U.S. officials about the Yongbyon visit some were not overly concerned because they believed Pyongyang already had nuclear weapons.<sup>216</sup> The U.S. appeared uninterested in North Korea's attempt to use its unofficial contacts and the Senate staffers to influence its preferred policy positions.

As the U.S. delegation prepared to return for the next round of 6PT, Bush continued to demand CVID, which meant Pyongyang was expected to disclose its HEU program. When the second round of 6PT resumed in February 2004, Bush was persuaded to abandon more of his initial preferences by approving bilateral talks with the North Koreans within the 6PT process. Kelly focused on the HEU program and stressed the U.S. would not return to the Agreed Framework, but the North argued Washington was wrong in Iraq and demanded evidence for the HEU. Kim also asked what the U.S. was prepared to do after North Korea gave up its nuclear program.<sup>217</sup> North Korea condescendingly demanded "a 'verifiable, irreversible' commitment" from the U.S. to abandon its hostile policy.<sup>218</sup> It also claimed, "CVID is a term for a defeated state, and we are not a defeated state. CVID is a humiliation to the DPRK. We won't accept this at all."<sup>219</sup> The U.S. later promised "multilateral security assurances" and withdrew its demand for CVID language and settled for "comprehensive dismantlement," but the talks recessed without a Joint Statement.<sup>220</sup> However,

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<sup>216</sup> Chinoy, *Meltdown*, pp. 198-201.

<sup>217</sup> Chinoy, *Meltdown*, pp. 202-207.

<sup>218</sup> DeYoung, *Soldier*, p. 499.

<sup>219</sup> Carlin and Lewis, "Negotiating with North Korea: 1992-2007," p. 18.

<sup>220</sup> Chinoy, *Meltdown*, pp. 202-207.

Bush was again persuaded to abandon another one of his strong initial preferences by conceding on the CVID for another formulation for denuclearization. It was a clear measure of North Korean smart power.

The Chinese must also have sensed some progress was being made with the U.S. because they chose to issue “a formal chairman’s statement,” which highlighted that all parties agreed to a “step-by-step process of ‘words for words’ and ‘action for action’” to resolve the North Korean nuclear issue. This concept, based on reciprocity, would become part of the Joint Statement in September 2005 and subsequent agreements.<sup>221</sup> The U.S. hardliners, however, continued to express their initial preferences to pressure North Korea when Cheney visited Beijing in April 2004. He warned the Chinese that Pyongyang could transfer nuclear weapons to terrorist groups like Al-Qaeda, and if North Korea refused to abandon its nuclear arsenal he issued a veiled threat to the Chinese that others in Northeast Asia would also acquire nuclear weapons. The North Koreans were furious and stated Cheney’s linking of Pyongyang to Al-Qaeda was “an expression of total ignorance.” However, when Kim Jong-il visited Beijing on April 19, 2004, he committed to another round of 6PT.<sup>222</sup> Later, in May 2004, Selig Harrison, former journalist and scholar, visited Pyongyang and met with senior North Korean officials. During the meeting, Kim Yong-nam, Chairman of the SPA, emphasized that North Korea has the right to earn hard currency by exporting missiles, but denounced terrorist groups and pledged Pyongyang would never transfer nuclear materials to “al-Qaeda or anyone else.” North Korea’s Foreign Minister claimed his country’s desire to possess nuclear weapons was purely for deterrence and it was willing to abandon them if the U.S. would take simultaneous steps toward resolution. He warned time was on its side as the North enhanced its nuclear deterrent.<sup>223</sup>

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<sup>221</sup> Carlin and Lewis, “Negotiating with North Korea: 1992-2007,” p. 17.

<sup>222</sup> Chinoy, *Meltdown*, pp. 208-210.

<sup>223</sup> Daniel W. Drezner, “North Korea talks to Selig Harrison,” *Foreign Policy*, May 4, 2004, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2004/05/04/north-korea-talks-to-selig-harrison/> (accessed May 28, 2016).

As the U.S. continued to build its case for more pressure against North Korea, Koizumi seemed to ignore Washington by agreeing to a second summit in Pyongyang in May 2004. During his meeting with Kim Jong-il, Koizumi offered “\$10 million in medical supplies and 250,000 tons of food.” In exchange, Kim allowed eight family members of abductees to depart for Japan. Kim also said he was ready to denuclearize if the U.S. was willing to negotiate bilaterally. At the end of the summit, Koizumi stated, “I felt personally that North Korea is interested in moving forward in a positive way with six-party talks... It is up to the U.S. to make a decision on what sort of approach it should take.”<sup>224</sup>

When the 6PT resumed on June 23, 2004, Kelly stressed the U.S. would not provide any lasting benefits until the complete dismantlement of the North’s nuclear program. Kim Kye-kwan called for rewards in exchange for a freeze, and emphasized his expectation for rewards along the way before final dismantlement. After the plenary session, Kim and Kelly held bilateral talks the next day, in which Kim threatened that unidentified hardliners in Pyongyang were calling for a nuclear test. As anticipated, another 6PT ended without a Joint Statement.<sup>225</sup> However, when Powell met his North Korean counterpart a week after the 6PT at a meeting in Asia, Paek Nam-sun indicated that if the U.S. was willing to offer rewards, such as provision of energy, sanctions relief, and de-listing from the state sponsors of terrorism list, Pyongyang would take steps toward denuclearization. Powell replied the U.S. did not have a hostile policy and had no intention to invade or attack North Korea. He encouraged Pyongyang to denuclearize, address the HEU issue, and stop threatening to conduct a nuclear test in order to build trust. Paek said that if the U.S. renounces its hostile policy Pyongyang was ready to resolve all these issues.<sup>226</sup> As time went on, North Korea probably sensed it could change Bush’s initial preferences regarding the talks but the U.S. kept the pressure on.

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<sup>224</sup> Chinoy, *Meltdown*, pp. 210-211.

<sup>225</sup> Chinoy, *Meltdown*, pp. 217-219.

<sup>226</sup> Chinoy, *Meltdown*, pp. 219-220.

In September 2004, the U.S. pitched its allegations about Pyongyang's HEU program by sending a briefing team led by Kelly to Beijing. Some within the U.S. delegation "found it less than compelling," and the Chinese were also skeptical. More importantly, "Bush signed the North Korea Human Rights Act," which granted North Korean refugees asylum, increased U.S. radio broadcasts aimed at Pyongyang, and supported organizations promoting human rights in North Korea. Pyongyang argued the new U.S. legislation was more evidence of U.S. hostile policy.<sup>227</sup> On February 10, 2005, Pyongyang declared it possessed nuclear weapons, retracted its unilateral missile moratorium from 1999, and refused to participate in the 6PT.<sup>228</sup> North Korea resorted to threats to force change in U.S. policy preferences.

### **6.5.3 Bush Reverses Course and NK Demonstrates Smart Power**

During the second Bush administration, Powell, Richard Armitage, and Kelly all departed the State Department. Condoleezza Rice became Secretary of State and quickly tapped Ambassador Christopher Hill to replace Kelly.<sup>229</sup> According to Rice, Hill "had an understanding of the region yet none of the innate prejudices," and "he was a creative thinker and a tough, persistent diplomat who had helped Richard Holbrooke face down Slobodan Milosevic in Serbia."<sup>230</sup> Moreover, the war in Iraq had become a disaster and managing it took most of the energy of the principals in the NSC.<sup>231</sup> Rice persuaded Bush it was time to negotiate seriously with Pyongyang. Despite the growing skepticism over Kim Jong-il's willingness to abandon his nuclear programs, she felt it was worth the effort to induce Kim to do so by offering a step by step approach to benefits. She persuaded Bush to give her more flexibility in negotiating with Pyongyang. Rice's strategy, however, depended on convincing the other members of the 6PT to withhold benefits if Pyongyang failed to live up to its obligations. The U.S. continued to take defensive measures against WMD

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<sup>227</sup> Chinoy, *Meltdown*, pp. 221-224.

<sup>228</sup> Oberdorfer and Carlin, *The Two Koreas*, p. 403.

<sup>229</sup> Chinoy, *Meltdown*, pp. 225-227.

<sup>230</sup> Rice, *No Higher Honor*, p. 312.

<sup>231</sup> Chinoy, *Meltdown*, p. 227.

proliferation and missile threats, but seemed to acknowledge that *the goal was changing regime behavior, not the regime itself*. Rice was confident Hill could move the 6PT process forward with her support and oversight.<sup>232</sup>

According to Hill, he agreed to accept the job because he believed the U.S. had to negotiate directly with the North Koreans within the 6PT process but, more importantly, the U.S. had to establish “patterns of cooperation” with other parties in Northeast Asia, particularly South Korea. He was also hopeful about the negotiations because the influence of the neoconservatives in the Bush administration was beginning to wane as policy failures such as Iraq began to pile up. He was hopeful that a more pragmatic group, such as Secretary Rice and National Security Advisor Hadley, would help him deal with the “neocon deadenders” as he prepared to denuclearize North Korea through tough negotiations. However, Hill soon realized that, in light of the policy shifts occurring in Iraq and Afghanistan at the time, the neocons led by Cheney and Rumsfeld would “make North Korea their final battle.”<sup>233</sup> That said, North Korea finally had the right Secretary of State and a bold U.S. negotiator who was empowered to negotiate a deal with Pyongyang, which gave it an opportunity to achieve significant outcomes while offering acceptable concessions.

Chris Hill quickly demonstrated his boldness by calling a “diplomatic audible” when the Chinese failed to show for a trilateral meeting with the North Koreans on July 9, 2005. The original plan was for him to hold a trilateral meeting in Beijing with his Chinese and North Korean counterparts to resume 6PT, but the plan called for the early departure of the Chinese to facilitate a bilateral meeting between Hill and Kim Kye-kwan. This arrangement satisfied Washington (no bilateral talks with North Korea) and Pyongyang (bilateral talks with the U.S. as a precondition for resuming 6PT) because both could claim they adhered to their principles for the talks. However, when the Chinese failed to show, Hill made the tough call to meet with the North Koreans and was later criticized by some as a negotiator having “gone rogue.” Hill argued he made

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<sup>232</sup> Rice, *No Higher Honor*, pp. 348-349.

<sup>233</sup> Hill, *Outpost*, pp. 196-199.

the “only call” by accepting the bilateral meeting, even though it went against U.S. policy at the time, with Kim Kye-kwan because the purpose of the carefully choreographed trilateral meeting was to restart the 6PT.<sup>234</sup>



**Figure 6.7.** Chris Hill meeting with South Korean negotiator Song Min-soon and North Korean negotiator Kim Kye-kwan at the Six-Party Talks in September 2005.

[http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/english/doc/2005-09/30/xin\\_28090220084596731961.jpg](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/english/doc/2005-09/30/xin_28090220084596731961.jpg)

The bilateral meeting with the North Koreans in Beijing got the 6PT back on track and when it finally resumed on July 26, 2005, Hill had some flexibility for give-and-take negotiations. His aim was to demonstrate to all the parties that the U.S. was committed to the success of the 6PT process, and he was willing to stay in Beijing as long as it took to secure a meaningful Joint Statement. He worked hard with his South Korean counterpart, Song Min-soon, to build a straw man for the Joint Statement, and it would focus on the need for North Korea to abandon its nuclear programs. Song wanted to push back on the Japanese effort to include the abductee issue into the document by arguing that perhaps thousands of South Koreans were abducted by Pyongyang. However, the Japanese could not let go of the abductee issue and, as a result,

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<sup>234</sup> Hill, *Outpost*, pp. 212-216.

the five-on-one scenario that was envisioned against the North Koreans did not materialize at the 6PT. Instead, Seoul became more disenchanted with Tokyo, especially when it was the only party that refused to participate in the provision of heavy fuel oil to encourage Pyongyang to freeze its plutonium plant and accept IAEA monitoring. The situation was so bad between the two sides that Hill scrapped the U.S.-ROK-Japan trilateral talks.<sup>235</sup> One could argue that, while North Korea failed to obtain significant aid from Japan due to the abductee issue, it was successful in dividing the two U.S. allies at the 6PT and weakened the U.S. effort to pressure Pyongyang at the talks.

As the talks resumed in September, the North Koreans pushed for provision of LWRs in the Joint Statement<sup>236</sup> and Chris Hill accepted the vague language on LWRs because it would be considered only after Pyongyang met all of its NPT obligations.<sup>237</sup> (see Figure 6.7). Hill was surprised that “the North Koreans received an extraordinary amount of sympathy from the Chinese and the Russians for its ‘right’ to have a civil nuclear program.” At the same time, U.S. conservatives who disapproved of negotiations with Pyongyang opposed the 6PT process going forward due to the ambiguity over the LWR issue, and these included some members of Hill’s delegation from the interagency.<sup>238</sup> Hill was satisfied with the concessions he offered since the September 19, 2005, Joint Statement obligated North Korea to abandon “all nuclear programs in return for security guarantees, economic and energy assistance, and a willingness to proceed with a peace treaty.”<sup>239</sup> The U.S. acknowledged Pyongyang’s security concerns by offering assurance in the statement not to attack or invade North Korea.<sup>240</sup>

The talks appeared to be on track, but Hill’s closing statement sent from Washington clarified that the provision of LWRs would not occur until the other parties verified Pyongyang had eliminated all of its nuclear weapons and related

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<sup>235</sup> Hill, *Outpost*, pp. 221-227.

<sup>236</sup> Oberdorfer and Carlin, *The Two Koreas*, pp. 404-408.

<sup>237</sup> Hill, “The Elusive Vision of a Non-nuclear North Korea,” p. 12.

<sup>238</sup> Hill, *Outpost*, pp. 236-238.

<sup>239</sup> Hill, “The Elusive Vision of a Non-nuclear North Korea,” p. 12.

<sup>240</sup> Oberdorfer and Carlin, *The Two Koreas*, p. 406.

programs. This unilateral condition was unacceptable to Pyongyang, and it argued that without provision of LWRs it would not accept its obligations in the Joint Statement.<sup>241</sup> More importantly, Hill's statement warned the U.S. "will take concrete actions necessary to protect ourselves and our allies (whether they asked for it or not) against any illicit and proliferation activities."<sup>242</sup>

#### **6.5.4 Resolution of BDA: True Measure of Kim's Smart Power**

Chris Hill was unaware, however, that while he worked hard to negotiate a nuclear deal with the North Koreans the Treasury Department would designate BDA in Macao as a "primary money laundering concern." The designation noted the BDA's relationship with several North Korean entities engaged in illicit activities. The unanticipated result was almost complete isolation of North Korea from the international financial system but "a train wreck" for the 6PT.<sup>243</sup> Hill believed that Treasury's actions by "media-savvy" political appointees to publicize North Korea's illicit activities were a mistake since the information could have been used to collect more evidence to pressure Pyongyang. Hill argued Stuart Levy from Treasury had oversold the department's ability to pressure Pyongyang. More importantly, all the parties, perhaps with the exception of Japan, were infuriated with the BDA designation since it shut down the 6PT process.<sup>244</sup> Pyongyang adroitly managed to convert its illicit activities to its advantage and gained the support of the Chinese, Russians, and even the South Koreans in blaming the U.S. for disrupting the implementation of the September 19, 2005, Joint Statement.

The Treasury Department defended the BDA designation and argued it was not a deliberate attempt to derail the 6PT.<sup>245</sup> The BDA in fact had become a major concern for the U.S. since early 2005, and as the 6PT was about to resume during the summer of 2005 Treasury felt it had sufficient evidence to target BDA. It claimed the State Department's Korea specialists were skeptical,

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<sup>241</sup> Oberdorfer and Carlin, *The Two Koreas*, pp. 406-408.

<sup>242</sup> Hill, *Outpost*, p. 240.

<sup>243</sup> Oberdorfer and Carlin, *The Two Koreas*, pp. 408-409.

<sup>244</sup> Hill, *Outpost*, pp. 240-242.

<sup>245</sup> Zarate, *Treasury's War*, pp. 251-252.



but accepted the designation as a law enforcement action when Treasury finally designated BDA on September 9, 2005.<sup>246</sup> Hill seems to disagree with this interpretation by writing that “the publicizing of our efforts was undermining the negotiation track. And what’s more, they seemed intended to do just that.” When the 6PT resumed on November 9, 2005, as anticipated by Hill, it made no progress at all.<sup>247</sup> As the U.S. waited for Pyongyang to return to the 6PT, Bush revealed his “grand bargain” to Hu Jintao during his visit to Washington in April 2006. Bush informed Hu that he was willing to sign a peace treaty with Kim Jong-il and recognize his regime if Kim gave up his nuclear weapons. However, when National Security Advisor Hadley interpreted this to mean regime change was no longer an option, Bush informed Hadley he was wrong and this was “regime change by other means.”<sup>248</sup>

Almost on cue, Pyongyang launched more missiles on July 4, 2006, and conducted its first nuclear test in October 2006.<sup>249</sup> Bush responded by declaring his redline for North Korea after the nuclear test. On October 9, 2006, Bush declared, “The transfer of nuclear weapons or material by North Korea to states or non-state entities would be considered a grave threat to the United States...and we would hold North Korea fully accountable of the consequences of such action.”<sup>250</sup> The UNSC also condemned the missile launches and issued its Resolution 1695.<sup>251</sup> As noted earlier, Russia supported the North by offering to forgive its \$8 billion in debt.<sup>252</sup> When the 6PT finally resumed in December 2006, Pyongyang viewed the BDA action as a U.S. attempt to pursue a policy of “carrots and sticks,” and warned it would respond with “dialogue and shields.” Some viewed it as a not-so-veiled threat to conduct a second nuclear test.<sup>253</sup>

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<sup>246</sup> Chinoy, *Meltdown*, pp. 256-259.

<sup>247</sup> Hill, *Outpost*, pp. 243-246.

<sup>248</sup> Rice, *No Higher Honor*, pp. 524-527.

<sup>249</sup> Bush, *Decision Points*, pp. 425-426.

<sup>250</sup> Baker, *Days of Fire*, p. 493.

<sup>251</sup> Hill, *Outpost*, p. 247.

<sup>252</sup> Moscow Times reported on September 15, 2012, that Russia would forgive \$11 billion of North Korean debt.

<sup>253</sup> Chinoy, *Meltdown*, p. 316.

Hill and Rice, however, convinced Bush to allow his first official bilateral talks with the North Koreans in Berlin without any third party involvement. This was yet another indicator North Korea's smart power strategy was beginning to bear fruit. After Hill met with Kim Kye-kwan on January 16, 2007, the U.S. agreed to resolve the BDA issue. In the end, both sides seemed to view the meeting as an opportunity to establish mutual trust, and it cleared the way for 6PT to resume on February 8, 2007. After more difficult negotiations, an agreement to implement the September 2005 Joint Statement<sup>254</sup> was finally reached on February 13, 2007.<sup>255</sup> It was clear those in the U.S. who favored negotiations with Pyongyang were beginning to gain advantage and U.S. policy aligned more with Pyongyang's own preferences to move the denuclearization process forward. However, the hardliners in Washington viewed the agreement as "disgraceful" and embracing of "Clintonism."<sup>256</sup>

#### **6.5.5 U.S. Restraint after Pyongyang's Nuclear Proliferation to Syria**

As the State Department attempted to resolve the BDA issue, few in the U.S. knew "there was no on-off switch to this kind of pressure," and it would be difficult to unravel what Treasury had unleashed in September 2005. The North Koreans knew exactly what was at stake, not only the \$25 million but restoration of their financial reputation.<sup>257</sup> The U.S. decision to proceed with the nuclear agreement became problematic when the Israelis accused the North Koreans of proliferating nuclear technology to Syria in mid-April 2007. They provided overhead imagery of the facility as well as photos of North Korean officials at the site. Bush informed his senior advisors not to leak this information and after further review of the intelligence, he refused to bomb the nuclear facility because the U.S. IC assessed with "low confidence" this was a "plutonium reprocessing operation or a warhead development program." Despite the evidence suggesting North Korea had crossed Bush's October 2006 redline, he

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<sup>254</sup> Chinoy, *Meltdown*, pp. 316-327.

<sup>255</sup> Carlin and Lewis, "Negotiating with North Korea," pp. 16-18.

<sup>256</sup> Baker, *Days of Fire*, p. 535.

<sup>257</sup> Zarate, *Treasury's War*, pp. 253-255.

was not willing to risk the progress being made with Pyongyang as IAEA inspectors returned to North Korea.<sup>258</sup> Hence, the agreement to resolve the BDA issue proceeded but the Treasury officials later claimed Chris Hill's diplomatic team were overzealous in trying to fix the problem.

The Treasury and State Departments literally waged a bureaucratic battle over the BDA issue, and when it was settled, the U.S. found a way to transfer \$25 million from BDA to North Korea. The U.S. had the Federal Reserve Bank of New York wire the money through a Russian bank to North Korea in June 2007.<sup>259</sup> Treasury officials admitted that the "North Koreans had expertly turned the tables," and the U.S. was manipulated by Pyongyang just as the financial pressure seemed to be mounting on the Kim regime.<sup>260</sup> This seems to suggest that Pyongyang had convinced the State Department to align its preference with its own for the sake of denuclearization, and forced the Treasury Department to abandon its initial preferences regarding the BDA issue. It was a huge win for Kim Jong-il, and signalled the dysfunctional nature of U.S. North Korea policy within the interagency.

The U.S. policy reversal was quite remarkable since it continued even after Israel bombed Syria's Al Kibar facility in September 2007.<sup>261</sup> Bush asked what impact this would have on the 6PT, and Chris Hill indicated that he could use the incident to inform the North Koreans that "as long as they engaged in this type of behavior either we or someone else would come after them. They would never have a day of rest." Hill was also permitted by the CIA to disclose photos of North Koreans meeting with Syrian nuclear experts. Kim Kye-kwan discredited it by claiming it was "photoshopped," but at the conclusion of the 6PT on October 3, 2007, he agreed to provide a "complete and correct declaration of all its nuclear programs." Kim also agreed to disable nuclear facilities at Yongbyon and reaffirmed the pledge "not to transfer nuclear

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<sup>258</sup> Baker, *Days of Fire*, pp. 541-553.

<sup>259</sup> Zarate, *Treasury's War*, pp. 257-264.

<sup>260</sup> Zarate, *Treasury's War*, pp. 264-265.

<sup>261</sup> Thomas H. Henriksen, *America and The Rogue States* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp. 130-134.

material, technology, or know-how.”<sup>262</sup> It is likely that Pyongyang began to disable its nuclear program because of the resolution of the BDA issue, but it is plausible that it might have been influenced by the U.S. disclosure of its nuclear proliferation to Syria. That said, Bush chose not to publicize this violation at the time to publicly pressure Pyongyang.

North Korea responded promptly by inviting select members of the U.S. delegation to the 6PT to Pyongyang in late 2007, and provided “specialized aluminum” to the team as a matter of transparency. When the team returned to the U.S. and the material was analyzed by the U.S. IC, it was revealed that it contained traces of HEU. Although the revelation would bring more criticism from conservatives after it was leaked to the press, Hill emphasized that the progress made on the HEU program would not have occurred without negotiations. Hill took a trip to North Korea himself to visit the Yongbyon nuclear facility in November 2007 to observe the shutdown of the reactor and meet with U.S. technicians at the site. He realized that the steps taken to disable the reactor made the cooling tower useless and proposed to have it destroyed to show tangible progress toward dismantlement.<sup>263</sup>

Hill met with Kim Kye-kwan in Geneva in March 2008 to discuss Pyongyang’s nuclear declaration and to remind him of the HEU program, but Kim refused to acknowledge the existence of the uranium program. They met again in April 2008 in Singapore and the decision was made to focus on fully disclosing the plutonium program. The North Koreans agreed to provide the records of its plutonium program dating back to 1986.<sup>264</sup> Some officials in Washington probably were concerned North Korea’s HEU program was not part of Hill’s deal in Singapore and pressured Bush to disclose what the U.S. knew about Pyongyang’s nuclear proliferation to Syria.<sup>265</sup>

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<sup>262</sup> Hill, *Outpost*, pp. 274-279.

<sup>263</sup> Hill, *Outpost*, pp. 279-285.

<sup>264</sup> Hill, *Outpost*, pp. 279-285.

<sup>265</sup> Baker, *Days of Fire*, p. 590.



**Figure 6.8.** The Cooling Tower at Yongbyon being destroyed in June 2008.  
[http://images.csmonitor.com/csm/2013/04/Yongbyon.jpg?alias=standard\\_600x400](http://images.csmonitor.com/csm/2013/04/Yongbyon.jpg?alias=standard_600x400)

Again, North Korea demonstrated the effectiveness of its smart power strategy by persuading the U.S. to abandon its initial preferences regarding the HEU and settle for a plutonium-based declaration. By early 2008, Pyongyang had received 200,000 tons of heavy fuel oil, but it complained it was promised 300,000 tons more and withheld its full nuclear declaration.<sup>266</sup> The continuation of the diplomatic track was bewildering to some observers since Bush had declared Pyongyang's nuclear proliferation as a clear redline. Instead of increasing pressure on Pyongyang, it appeared as if Washington was turning a blind eye.<sup>267</sup> Hardliners like John Bolton viewed these developments as evidence of the State Department's bureaucratic triumph over Bush as the U.S. adopted most of the key elements of Clinton's failed 1994 Agreed

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<sup>266</sup> Henriksen, *America and The Rogue States*, pp. 130-134.

<sup>267</sup> McEachern, *Inside The Red Box*, p. 207.

Framework.<sup>268</sup> On the other hand, Chris Hill argued that the diplomacy provided access to information regarding Pyongyang's plutonium program that "no one had obtained before." He even argued his "*negotiations threatened the theory that nothing could be achieved by talking with dictators.*"<sup>269</sup> In the end, North Korea had crossed Bush's redline and by showing restraint, he taught Pyongyang the U.S. did not have the will to protect itself and its allies.

In May 2008, the U.S. finally disclosed to the media the evidence of Pyongyang's proliferation of nuclear technology to Syria. At about the same time, the U.S. received "18,000 pages of documents" concerning North Korea's plutonium program at Yongbyon. On June 27, 2008, North Korea demonstrated its commitment to dismantle its nuclear program by blowing up the cooling tower at Yongbyon.<sup>270</sup> Watching the cooling tower collapse on television, "Bush said with satisfaction, 'Now that's verifiable'."<sup>271</sup> (see Figure 6.8). This was a symbolic gesture but Washington was concerned about Pyongyang's incomplete nuclear declaration. There were even some reports that North Korea had received \$2.5 million for allowing the media to film the destruction of its cooling tower.<sup>272</sup> After North Korea sent its official nuclear declaration to the Chinese on June 26, 2008, which included the precise amount of plutonium it used for its first nuclear test, it was still viewed as incomplete.<sup>273</sup> Hill made one last trip to Pyongyang in October 2008 to secure an agreement on verification protocols. The North Koreans refused to cooperate, however.<sup>274</sup> It appeared as if Pyongyang had offered its minimum concessions and, when its offer to start the verification process by getting people on the ground first was rejected by Hill, the North Koreans chose to stop cooperating. This ended Bush's efforts

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<sup>268</sup> John Bolton, *Surrender Is Not an Option, Defending America at the United Nations and Abroad* (New York: Threshold Editions, 2007), pp. 310-313.

<sup>269</sup> Hill, *Outpost*, p. 285.

<sup>270</sup> Choe, Sang-hun, "North Korea destroys cooling tower at nuclear plant," *New York Times* [http://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/27/world/asia/27iht-korea.1.14044540.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/27/world/asia/27iht-korea.1.14044540.html?_r=0) (accessed September 13, 2015).

<sup>271</sup> Baker, *Days of Fire*, pp. 541-552.

<sup>272</sup> Henriksen, *America and The Rogue States*, pp. 134-135.

<sup>273</sup> Hill, *Outpost*, p. 287.

<sup>274</sup> Hill, *Outpost*, p. 289.

to pursue a negotiated nuclear settlement with Pyongyang, but the outcomes demonstrated North Korea is capable of executing smart power strategies to achieve its aims.

#### **6.5.6 North Korea Offsets Bush's Hardline with Smart Power**

First, what was Kim's preferred outcome with the U.S.? North Korea had improved its relationship with the U.S. during the Clinton administration but the Bush administration made it clear from the beginning it was prepared to nullify Clinton's nuclear agreement with North Korea and pursue regime change in Pyongyang. It viewed Seoul's Sunshine Policy as appeasement and Bush's Axis of Evil speech in January 2002 was perceived by many as a declaratory policy to seek regime change. After the revelation of North Korea's HEU program, many in the U.S. concluded Pyongyang will never abandon its nuclear weapons and abrogated the Agreed Framework. Moreover, Kim's apology on the abductee issue galvanized anti-North Korean sentiment in Japan but due to its myopic view regarding the issue, Tokyo was no longer a major player in nuclear negotiations.

The U.S. began to exert increased pressure on Pyongyang, including promotion of PSI and passage of human rights legislation. It was evident to Pyongyang that Washington posed the only threat to its survival. The progressive Roh Moo-hyun government in Seoul, a U.S. ally, showed sympathy for North Korea's position that its nuclear program was a deterrent for U.S. attack. This was a bad omen and when the war in Iraq became a debacle for the U.S., the Bush administration was forced to pursue negotiations with Pyongyang. After difficult negotiations, the U.S. agreed to provisions of fuel, sanctions relief, and de-listing of North Korea as a state sponsor of terrorism in exchange for North Korea's nuclear dismantlement. The second nuclear agreement ensured North Korea's survival as long as it continued to take small steps toward dismantlement of its plutonium based nuclear program, but the threat of regime change was perceived as real in Pyongyang, and it hedged by refusing to acknowledge its HEU program until Bush left office. Moreover, it probably gave Kim (false) confidence that U.S. was reluctant to use force

against him even after Bush and Hill had warned the U.S. would protect itself and its allies against North Korean illicit and proliferation activities.

Second, which forms of power behavior did Kim view as most effective to achieve his aims? Kim may have attempted to gain some legitimacy by issuing an apology to Japan regarding the abductee issue but it galvanized anti-North Korean sentiment in Japan. However, most Koreans on both sides of the border may have perceived the Japanese reaction as unjustified since Tokyo has refused to settle its own crimes during the colonial period. Also, there is some confusion about Kelly's meeting with Kang but Pyongyang may have attempted to use coercion in October 2002 by revealing to Kelly it possessed a covert uranium enrichment program. The regime quickly denied it made the revelation when it was disclosed in the press and accused the U.S. of trying to justify its efforts to abrogate the Agreed Framework. At the same time, it attempted to co-opt former U.S. officials and reporters to convey Pyongyang's willingness to resolve the nuclear issue with the Bush administration.

When the U.S. ignored the positive gesture, North Korea withdrew from the NPT and began reprocessing its spent fuel but had already contacted former Governor Richardson to convey the same message – it wanted to negotiate with the U.S. Some in the State Department sensed the North Koreans truly felt threatened by the U.S. and were preparing to produce nuclear weapons but they could be stopped through negotiations. Others in China, Japan and South Korea were concerned as well and proposed multilateral talks to resolve the nuclear crisis. When these talks made no progress in 2003, North Koreans invited more Americans to Pyongyang and attempted to convince them they already possessed nuclear weapons, but the U.S. was unfazed by the threat. When talks resumed, North Korean negotiators claimed hardliners in Pyongyang wanted to conduct a nuclear test. It later retracted its missile moratorium in February 2005 when Bush signed the Human Rights Act. This was a not so subtle threat North Korea was developing a nuclear ICBM capability. Yet, the Bush administration's tipping point for negotiating with North Korea was not its nuclear threat, but the military disaster in Iraq.



The U.S. had little choice but to negotiate with North Korea despite its belief that Pyongyang could not be trusted. Nevertheless, Bush's hubris claimed the aim of negotiations with North Korea was regime change. He empowered Secretary Rice and Chris Hill to negotiate and implement the deal without interference from the rest of the interagency. This eventually led to a dysfunctional interagency process that led to the BDA debacle that forced U.S. diplomats to turn on their own Treasury counterparts to resolve the BDA issue. This coupled with U.S. inaction after Pyongyang's proliferation of nuclear technology to Syria demonstrated the North's power to manipulate the U.S.

Third, what resources were available to Kim to implement the strategy? Kim Jong-il engaged directly with Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun to gain major concessions from Seoul. He also engaged Koizumi to normalize relations with Japan. He may have assumed that his personal involvement and a bold apology would be sufficient to gain significant concessions from Tokyo as well. Kim was wrong but Japan became more isolated within the 6PT process when its primary aim was resolving the abductee issue, which other 6PT members viewed as less significant than the nuclear issue. The North Koreans at the same time attempted to increase pressure on the U.S. by revealing as much as they could about their nuclear programs to a select group of U.S. interlocutors, both official and unofficial, to attract nuclear negotiations or convey nuclear threats. The North Koreans also knew the U.S. was concerned about its growing missile capabilities and when the Bush administration began to increase pressure, it responded by retracting its unilateral missile moratorium and conducted a nuclear test and missile launches. The North Koreans also had experienced diplomats to negotiate nuclear deals and monitor the course of its implementation to protect its aim of survival. Finally, Pyongyang leveraged Beijing and Seoul's desire for stability on the Korean peninsula to pressure the U.S. to negotiate a nuclear deal.

Fourth, how did North Korea view the likelihood of success of its strategy? North Korea was probably uncertain that it could deter Bush from seeking regime change after his declaration of the Axis of Evil and the invasion of Iraq.

The North attempted various forms of coercion and persuasion to seek bilateral negotiations. It took several years before bilateral negotiations resumed but it is plausible that Pyongyang sensed that the probability of success increased when the direction of the war in Iraq turned unfavorably for Bush and when he finally sent an experienced negotiator to Beijing to negotiate a deal. Similarly, Kim probably believed that coming clean about the abduction issue with Koizumi would have led to normalization with Japan but he was wrong. On the other hand, Kim likely had little doubt he could maximize concessions from Seoul during the Kim and Roh years of progressive rule as long as he demonstrated some restraint.

Fifth, what were the policy preferences of key actors? North Korea offered to dismantle its nuclear program for more oil and food. It was also willing to freeze its nuclear activities and undergo IAEA inspections for a nonaggression treaty. Japan was willing to normalize relations with the North but the abduction issue constrained Tokyo's options unless Pyongyang was prepared to resolve the issue. The U.S. indicated it would take nothing short of CVID of North Korea's nuclear program before offering any concessions. North Korea warned unlike Iraq it had nuclear weapons. It wanted a package solution that obligated both sides to take simultaneous action. Pyongyang had to make sure the U.S. got the message by showing several Americans it possessed the materials to build a nuclear bomb. Bush finally approved bilateral talks with Pyongyang and settled for comprehensive dismantlement instead of CVID.

The U.S. shared its information about North Korea's HEU program with Beijing to pressure North Korea but the Chinese were not convinced. However, when the U.S. passed its North Korea Human Rights legislation the North Koreans declared in February 2005 that it possessed nuclear weapons and signaled they would resume their long range missile launches. This was apparently enough to convince Secretary Rice and others to persuade Bush to negotiate with North Korea, especially as the war in Iraq was unravelling.

While Bush aimed for regime change in North Korea, Chris Hill embraced his new role as the U.S. negotiator and intended to demonstrate the U.S. was

serious about collaborating with others to resolve the North Korean nuclear crisis, while Bush aimed for regime change. Hill admitted there was a cost to making progress at the 6PT. The U.S. concessions to North Korea included contributing to the shipment of 50,000 tons of heavy fuel oil, removing Pyongyang from the Trading with the Enemy Act, and de-listing Pyongyang as a state sponsor of terrorism.<sup>275</sup> However, Hill argued that it was worth the cost because the U.S. reputation in Asia benefited by being an active part of the 6PT and, unlike the past, Pyongyang was blamed for the breakdown of the talks.<sup>276</sup>

Chris Hill criticized the hardliners in the Bush administration for opposing any deal with Pyongyang, while offering no policy alternatives other than alienating South Korea and weakening the U.S. position in Asia. While he admitted diplomacy does not work all the time, he could not imagine any other alternatives but diplomacy for dealing with North Korea.<sup>277</sup> However, one could argue that the BDA designation, which surprised Hill and disappointed most of the other parties, probably hurt the U.S. reputation as a member of the 6PT process. This was a result of the constant infighting between Hill and hardliners in the Bush administration, and the situation made it difficult for the U.S. to develop an effective strategy to deal with North Korean intransigence. North Korea is a difficult problem as it is but the situation gets much more difficult without the Presidential leadership required to develop and maintain broad interagency support for a unified denuclearization strategy.

The evidence demonstrates that Bush was generally not aligned with his allies and partners on North Korea policy but still believed his pressure on Pyongyang made the difference in making some progress toward the North's nuclear dismantlement.<sup>278</sup> Bush's hardline policy worried Pyongyang but his lack of a coordinated interagency strategy led to significant missteps, and the implementation of the February 13, 2007 agreement failed to yield a "diplomatic

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<sup>275</sup> Hill, *Outpost*, p. 285.

<sup>276</sup> Hill, *Outpost*, p. 290.

<sup>277</sup> Hill, *Outpost*, p. 395.

<sup>278</sup> Bush, *Decision Points*, pp. 425-426.

victory.”<sup>279</sup> North Korea was willing to accommodate the Bush administration by taking some steps toward nuclear dismantlement, but it did not trust the U.S. and refused to declare its HEU program. Instead, Pyongyang demanded bilateral talks with the U.S. to resolve the nuclear problem and more effectively leveraged its expressions of coercive and persuasive power to achieve its desired outcomes with the U.S., South Korea, and China. Bush finally gave up on the 6PT process in late 2008 when North Korea failed to resolve the issue of verification and U.S. concerns persisted over the lack of transparency in the North’s nuclear declaration.<sup>280</sup> While Bush received some credit for his strategic decision to engage Pyongyang directly in 2007,<sup>281</sup> his initial resistance to engagement and subsequent inaction, especially after North Korea’s nuclear proliferation, may have taught North Korea “that there was almost nothing it might do on the nuclear front that would trigger a forceful response from Washington.”<sup>282</sup> True or not, one of the problems for Pyongyang was that Kim Jong-il was in poor health by the fall of 2008 and he had failed to designate his successor.<sup>283</sup>

## **6.6 Kim Responds to U.S.-South Korea Policy Alignment after Bush**

In February 2008, Lee Myung-bak, the new South Korean President, “accused the two previous [South Korean] administrations of propping up the North Korean regime and making it even more dangerous.” Lee’s aim was not to provide any assistance without “meaningful concessions from the North.” Moreover, Lankov argued when President Barack Obama took office in 2009, he was also in no hurry to engage the North. As a result of these unfavorable conditions, “North Korean strategists decided that it was time to manufacture a new crisis.” The use of this tactic was predictable since it had been so successful in extracting “concessions from their adversaries/donors.” Lankov argued the new crisis began in July 2008 when a KPA soldier shot a South

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<sup>279</sup> Henriksen, *America and The Rogue States*, p. 134.

<sup>280</sup> Hill, “The Elusive Vision of a Non-nuclear North Korea,” p. 13.

<sup>281</sup> Carlin and Lewis, “Negotiating with North Korea,” p. 20.

<sup>282</sup> Oberdorfer and Carlin, *The Two Koreas*, p. 418.

<sup>283</sup> Snyder, “Kim Jong-il’s Successor Dilemmas,” p. 35.

Korean female tourist near the Kumgang tourist zone, and that ended Hyundai's tourist venture with Pyongyang.<sup>284</sup> That being said, if North Korea's aim was to squeeze more concessions by manufacturing a crisis, causing an incident that would force Seoul to end the joint venture at the Kumgang resort, a reliable source of hard currency, seems to be a bad miscalculation.

What is more likely is that the shooting of a South Korean tourist was an accident and North Korea was highly sensitive to anti-regime propaganda after Kim Jong-il suffered a major stroke in August 2008. Kim's situation was so dire the North Koreans may have secretly arranged for a French neurosurgeon to visit Pyongyang to revive him from a coma.<sup>285</sup> The North Koreans issued an immediate apology after the shooting incident, but claimed the South Korean victim played a role in the incident by ignoring its regulations. Carlin and Oberdorfer claimed Seoul shut down the tours due to public outrage "even before all the facts could be determined." The KPA warned it would have to respond by taking "strong military counteractions against even the slightest hostile actions in the tourist resort area of Mt. Kumgang and the area under the military control."<sup>286</sup> The situation quickly escalated after the anti-North Korean activists launched their leaflets across the DMZ in November 2008 and when Seoul refused to stop the launches, Pyongyang suspended the tours at Kaesong city near the DMZ. It also threatened to shut down the KIC but Seoul refused to cooperate with Pyongyang.<sup>287</sup>

Many wondered how Obama would deal with Pyongyang as Bush's negotiation efforts ended in late 2008. His inauguration speech in January 2009 suggested Obama would follow Bush's lead and his desire to negotiate with the North Koreans appeared conditional. He viewed North Korea as a corrupt authoritarian regime that had to "unclench" its fists before the U.S. would reach

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<sup>284</sup> Lankov, *The Real North Korea*, pp. 174-176.

<sup>285</sup> Associated Press, "Kim Jong Il's doctor opens up on '08 stroke," December 19, 2011, <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/kim-jong-ils-doctor-opens-up-on-08-stroke/> (accessed September 9, 2015).

<sup>286</sup> Oberdorfer and Carlin, *The Two Koreas*, p. 442.

<sup>287</sup> Lankov, *The Real North Korea*, pp. 175-176.

out to it.<sup>288</sup> As speculation grew about the succession process after Kim Jong-il's stroke,<sup>289</sup> Pyongyang tested Obama's resolve by declaring a satellite launch on February 24, 2009.<sup>290</sup> It perceived the allegation and the attempt to levy UN sanctions as "a revelation of hostility towards it."<sup>291</sup> As Pyongyang proceeded with the launch on April 5, the Obama administration led the effort to issue a strong UNSC statement. The North Koreans responded by "expelling the IAEA inspectors and removing the seals and cameras monitoring the Yongbyon reactor,"<sup>292</sup> and declared "it would build its own LWR."<sup>293</sup> On May 25, 2009, North Korea conducted its second nuclear test. The U.S. ceased negotiations and gave Pyongyang an ultimatum: "End your nuclear program if you wish to gain international acceptance and assistance or face ever-increasing pressure." The U.S. was willing to wait and see how North Korea would respond.<sup>294</sup> Some described this approach as "Bush Lite."<sup>295</sup>

North Korea responded by declaring it would start uranium enrichment on June 13, 2009.<sup>296</sup> About this time, Kim Jong-un was being revealed as the designated successor as North Korea's propaganda organs began to release short hagiographies of the 27-year-old third son of the Supreme Leader.<sup>297</sup> On a positive note, in August 2009, Kim Jong-il met with former President Clinton to gain the release of two American journalists who inadvertently crossed into

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<sup>288</sup> John Delury, "The Disappointments of Disengagement: Assessing Obama's North Korea Policy," *Asian Perspective*, No. 37 (2013), pp.154-155.

<sup>289</sup> Kim, *North Korean Foreign Policy*, p. 189.

<sup>290</sup> KCNA, "Preparations for Launch of Experimental Communications Satellite in Full Gear," February 24, 2009, <http://www.kcna.co.jp/index-e.htm> (accessed June 23, 2015).

<sup>291</sup> KCNA, "Spokesman for DPRK Foreign Ministry Slams Anti-DPRK Campaign over Its Projected Satellite Launch," March 24, 2009, <http://www.kcna.co.jp/index-e.htm> (accessed June 23, 2015).

<sup>292</sup> Jeffrey A. Bader, *Obama and China's Rise: An Insider's Account of America's Asia Strategy* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2012), pp. 31-32.

<sup>293</sup> Siegfried S. Hecker, "What I found in Yongbyon and Why It Matters," American Physical Society, (Document is not dated but Hecker wrote the article after visiting North Korea on November 12, 2010) <https://courses.physics.illinois.edu/phys280/archive/2011-03%20Hecker%20%20What%20I%20found%20in%20Yongbyon%20and%20Why%20It%20Matters.pdf> (accessed September 11, 2015).

<sup>294</sup> Bader, *Obama and China's Rise*, pp. 37-39.

<sup>295</sup> Delury, "The Disappointments of Disengagement," p.157.

<sup>296</sup> David Albright and Paul Brannan, "Taking Stock: North Korea's Uranium Enrichment Program," *The Institute for Science and International Security*, October 8, 2010, p.1.

<sup>297</sup> Snyder, "Kim Jong-il's Successor Dilemmas," p. 36.

North Korea.<sup>298</sup> Kim then offered Lee Myung-bak an inter-Korean summit, and the two sides initiated secret talks in October 2009 to coordinate the conditions for the summit, but the talks broke down in November. Seoul claimed the North “asked for too much compensation.” As the summit talks were faltering, the South Korean navy fired on a North Korean patrol boat after it crossed the NLL “by mistake.” Carlin and Oberdorfer believed this was when Kim Jong-il decided “it was time to teach the Blue House a lesson.”<sup>299</sup> However, Kim was running out of time to prepare his son to replace him and probably felt the pressure to accelerate the grooming process. North Korea announced in September 2009 that its “experimental uranium enrichment had entered into the ‘completion phase’.”<sup>300</sup> After that, the North’s rhetoric would end and it would launch one of the most provocative military campaigns since the end of the Second Korean War in 2010. The question is why?

## **6.7 Rush to Succession: Cheonan Sinking and Yeonpyeong Island Attack**

According to Bruce Bechtol, Jr., North Korea signaled its displeasure with the South Korean Navy in January 2009 by warning it to cease its “hostile posture” along the NLL and threatened it would protect its sovereignty at sea. Then it reshuffled the senior leadership of the KPA to prepare for the provocations of 2010.<sup>301</sup> On the other hand, Joseph S. Bermudez, Jr., highlighted the reorganization of North Korea’s intelligence and security services from 2009 to 2010, which was intended to deal with “increasing levels of unrest and corruption” within society and the KPA. Perhaps more importantly, the reorganization established the Reconnaissance General Bureau (RGB). The RGB was formed by merging the KWP’s Operations Bureau (e.g., responsible for training of intelligence agents and their infiltration), Office 35 (e.g., collected foreign intelligence and overseas operations), and the

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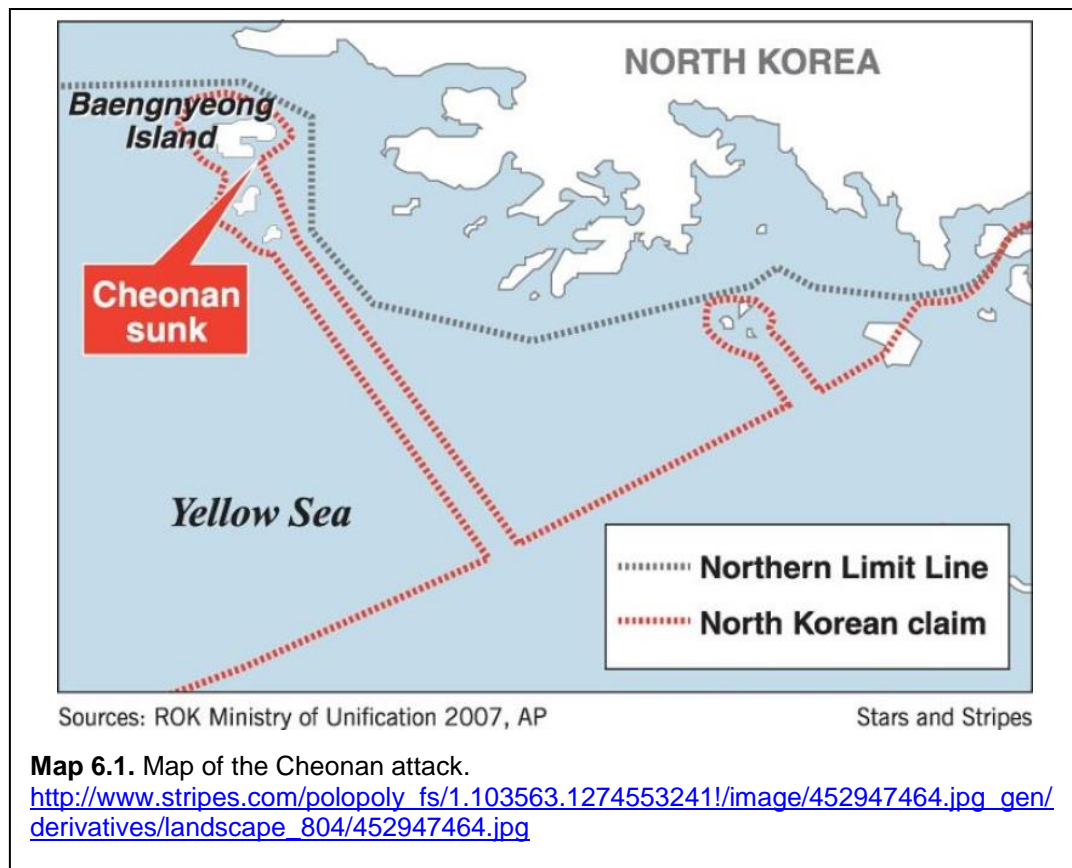
<sup>298</sup> Jack Kim, “Bill Clinton in North Korea, Meets Kim Jong-il,” *Reuters*, August 4, 2009, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2009/08/04/us-korea-north-idUSSP47880420090804> (accessed September 9, 2015).

<sup>299</sup> Oberdorfer and Carlin, *The Two Koreas*, pp. 442-445.

<sup>300</sup> Albright and Brannan, “Taking Stock: North Korea’s Uranium Enrichment Program,” p.1

<sup>301</sup> Bechtol, *The Last Days of Kim Jong-il*, pp. 59-61.

Ministry of People's Armed Forces (MPAF) Reconnaissance Bureau (e.g., responsible for anti-South Korean operations such as the raid on the Blue House in 1968 and the Rangoon bombing in 1983). Like many others, Bermudez attributed the sinking of the Cheonan to a YEONO-class submarine from the RGB, but he also warned of "more provocative operations in the future."<sup>302</sup> In short, Kim was preparing his intelligence, special operations, and conventional forces for a well-organized provocation campaign in 2010.



As discussed earlier, General Kim Kyok-sik was reassigned as the commander of the IV Corps, which is the unit best positioned to influence events near the NLL. Kim was also prepared to teach Lee a lesson after the South Korean Navy fired about 50 rounds at a North Korean naval ship after it

<sup>302</sup> Joseph S. Bermudez, Jr., "38 North Special Report: A New Emphasis on Operations Against South Korea?," 38 North Special Report 4, June 11, 2010, pp. 1-4.



inadvertently cross the NLL in November 2009. Moreover, the KPA conducted “large-scale artillery live-fire exercises” along the NLL in late January 2010. This was probably a rehearsal for the attack on Yeonpyeong Island,<sup>303</sup> and confirms the North carefully planned the provocation campaign for 2010. The provocation campaign started with the surprise sinking of the South Korean Naval ship Cheonan south of the NLL and near the Northwest Islands (NWI) on March 26, 2010.<sup>304</sup> (see Map 6.1 above).

While Bechtol argued the attack on the Cheonan was primarily motivated by revenge, a South Korean official speculated the aim was to validate the North’s asymmetric capabilities and it would use similar tactics in the future.<sup>305</sup> Victor Cha agreed with the others that the attack was likely in retaliation for the 2009 naval clash, another attempt to gain concessions, and a demonstration of its enhanced naval capabilities. Cha added that North Korea may be pursuing its own hardline policy due to uncertainties associated with leadership succession.<sup>306</sup> Still others argued that the attack may also have been Kim’s response to Lee Myung-bak’s decision to “almost entirely dismiss the Kim [Jong-il]-Roh [Moo-hyun] summit agreement.”<sup>307</sup>

Kim and Roh met in early October 2007 and agreed to take several steps to improve inter-Korean relations. One of the steps included resolving tensions along the NLL:

[E]stablishing a West Sea “special peace and cooperation zone comprised of the Haeju District (in North Korea) and its neighboring areas” and “pushing ahead with the establishment of a joint fishing area and peaceful waters, the construction of a special economic zone, the practical use of Haeju Port, the direct passage of civilian vessels to Haeju, and joint use of the estuary of the Han River.”<sup>308</sup>

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<sup>303</sup> Bechtol, *The Last Days of Kim Jong-Il*, pp. 59-61.

<sup>304</sup> Cha and Kim, “The Sinking of the Cheonan,” pp. 1-2.

<sup>305</sup> Cha and Kim, “The Sinking of the Cheonan,” pp. 1-2.

<sup>306</sup> Victor Cha, “The Aftermath of the Cheonan,” *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, May 25, 2010, <http://csis.org/publication/aftermath-cheonan> (accessed September 9, 2015).

<sup>307</sup> Oberdorfer and Carlin, *The Two Koreas*, p. 441.

<sup>308</sup> Oberdorfer and Carlin, *The Two Koreas*, p. 440.

This was a sincere and perhaps naïve attempt by Roh to turn the waters along the NLL “less volatile.” However, when Lee replaced Roh in February 2008, he assumed North Korea was in decline and “the best way to encourage those trends was to turn off the aid and cash spigot and deal with Kim Jong-il from a position of strength.” Thus, from Kim’s perspective, Lee was intentionally abrogating “one of the main goals of the summit [which] was to create a framework for easing tensions in the West Sea.”<sup>309</sup> As a South Korean official suspected, Kim used his asymmetric capabilities (i.e., superiority under sea), but he also aimed to weaken Lee’s hardline policy.

After the Cheonan sinking, Lee kept his cool by requesting “an independent, multinational civilian-military investigation” comprised of representatives from the U.S., UK, Sweden, and Australia. In the interim, on April 17, Pyongyang denied any involvement in the sinking that killed 46 members of the crew.<sup>310</sup> As discussed, some also argued that North Korea aimed to bolster its succession process by attacking the Cheonan,<sup>311</sup> but the argument is weak since the North could not maximize the propaganda value of the successful attack. This is likely despite reports Kim Jong-il may have visited the RGB soon after the attack.<sup>312</sup> Some even argued that the KWP cadres were giving lectures that the KPA had taken revenge presumably for the 2009 naval incident and the South Koreans were now in fear of the KPA.<sup>313</sup> This seems to defy logic (unless it was only to boost the morale of certain units in the KPA) since North Korea refused to acknowledge it had sunk the South Korean ship. Thus, the aim appears to have been revenge and not to bolster the succession by claiming a victory.

On September 12, the multinational investigation officially concluded “that a torpedo fired by a North Korean submarine sank the Cheonan.” However, Seoul decided to release a preliminary report on May 20, three days

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<sup>309</sup> Oberdorfer and Carlin, *The Two Koreas*, pp. 439-443.

<sup>310</sup> Cha and Kim, “U.S.-Korea Relations: The Sinking of the Cheonan,” pp. 1-2.

<sup>311</sup> Chan, “The Incredible Shrinking Crisis,” p. 20.

<sup>312</sup> Oberdorfer and Carlin, *The Two Koreas*, p. 445.

<sup>313</sup> Bechtol, *The Last Days of Kim Jong-Il*, p. 66.

before the start of the campaign season for the local government elections. Some accused Lee of exploiting the sinking of the Cheonan to bolster the ruling party's election prospects.<sup>314</sup> There were press leaks indicating that "two or three" North Korean submarines were missing from their home ports before the attack and the crew were recognized for their bravery.<sup>315</sup> Thus, many were convinced the North Koreans were responsible and "the smoking gun was the discovery of key parts of a North Korean torpedo near the spot of the sinking." However, for many progressive South Koreans "there were enough ambiguities and inconsistencies" in the multinational report for them to question North Korean complicity.<sup>316</sup> A South Korean poll indicated after the final report was released that its findings were not widely accepted since only about 33 percent of those polled were convinced North Korea was responsible for the attack.<sup>317</sup> Some observers concluded the lack of support for the investigation was largely due to the Lee administration's "heavy-handed approach in dealing with the incident, and its reluctance to address or even allow for questions or concerns." In fact, the government threatened to file "defamation charges against leading figures who questioned the government's findings, doubted a link to North Korea, or proffered alternative explanations."<sup>318</sup>

In spite of the lingering questions about the findings of the investigation, Seoul and Washington viewed the results as conclusive. Therefore, they chose not to offer any concessions for simply returning to the status quo, and the U.S. demonstrated its solidarity with South Korea when the U.S. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) warned against further provocations and President Obama reaffirmed the U.S.'s "extended nuclear deterrent to South Korea." The two allies condemned the hostile action and referred the case to the UNSC. Seoul finally agreed to participate in the U.S.-led PSI to combat the spread of

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<sup>314</sup> Kim Hye-eun, Greg Chaffin, and Peter Certo, "The Cheonan Incident: Skepticism Abounds," *Foreign Policy In Focus*, November 15, 2010, [http://fpif.org/the\\_cheonan\\_incident\\_skepticism\\_abounds/](http://fpif.org/the_cheonan_incident_skepticism_abounds/) (accessed September 9, 2015).

<sup>315</sup> Cha and Kim, "U.S.-Korea Relations: The Sinking of the Cheonan," p. 1.

<sup>316</sup> Peter Beck, "North Korea in 2010: Provocations and Succession," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 51, No. 1, 2011, p. 34.

<sup>317</sup> Kim, Chaffin, and Certo, "The Cheonan Incident: Skepticism Abounds."

<sup>318</sup> Kim, Chaffin, and Certo, "The Cheonan Incident: Skepticism Abounds."

WMD and related activities. In order to address the North's conventional threats, the South conducted a joint anti-submarine warfare (ASW) exercise that included a U.S. aircraft carrier. More importantly, the "careful, deliberate approach" of President Lee, despite calls for retaliation, gained the respect of Obama and elevated the status of South Korea as America's "linchpin" in Asia. Obama agreed to delay the wartime operational control (OPCON) from April 2012 to December 2015 due to the worsening security environment in Korea. According to Victor Cha and Ellen Kim, Lee's measured approach also won him the support of the G8 countries as they "condemned the attack on the Cheonan." However, tellingly, Moscow and Beijing refused to accept the findings of the multilateral investigation and opposed any action to condemn or punish Pyongyang.<sup>319</sup>

On the other hand, Jeremy Chan offers a more critical interpretation of actions taken by South Korea and China following the Cheonan Incident. Chan argued that both countries attempted to maintain a delicate balance between their security and economic interests. It was true Seoul took several tough measures against Pyongyang, including its declaration to restrict trade and to resume loudspeaker broadcasts across the DMZ; however, it chose not to suspend its joint venture with Pyongyang at the KIC,<sup>320</sup> which earns the Kim regime about \$80 to 100 million a year.<sup>321</sup> Furthermore, after the ruling conservative party's lackluster performance during the local election in June, Chan highlighted that most South Koreans were sympathetic and were generally ambivalent "toward North Korea's involvement in the Cheonan sinking, as well as one of resignation toward China."<sup>322</sup> The ruling party had lost ten of sixteen key local races and many viewed this "as a rebuke of Lee's post-Cheonan posturing."<sup>323</sup> This persuaded Lee to reconsider his hard line

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<sup>319</sup> Cha and Kim, "The Sinking of the Cheonan," pp. 1-3.

<sup>320</sup> Chan, "The Incredible Shrinking Crisis," pp. 19-30.

<sup>321</sup> Sheena Chestnut Greitens, "Illicit: North Korea's Evolving Operations to Earn Hard Currency," *Committee for Human Rights in North Korea*, 2014, <https://www.hrnk.org/uploads/pdfs/SCG-FINAL-FINAL.pdf> (accessed March 10, 2015).

<sup>322</sup> Chan, "The Incredible Shrinking Crisis," p. 25.

<sup>323</sup> Kim, Chaffin, Certo, "The Cheonan Incident: Skepticism Abounds."

toward Pyongyang, which was known as “strategic neglect,” and he began to sense his hardline approach was probably the wrong strategy.<sup>324</sup> Oberdorfer and Carlin confirmed that when Lee left office he “had not in the end left the situation in better shape.”<sup>325</sup>

By September 2010, Seoul signaled a change in its approach when it decided to send \$8.5 million worth of humanitarian aid to the North for the first time since Lee took office in 2008. This aid was officially provided to assist in the recovery of Sinuiju after severe flooding, and Pyongyang reciprocated by releasing a fishing boat and its South Korean and Chinese crew. There was also a report suggesting that Seoul was ready to offer another KIC-like joint venture to the North, which signified its desire to de-escalate. If this was simply another one of Kim’s crisis manufacturing strategies to gain concessions from Seoul and Washington, it was an opportune time, but he ignored Lee’s reconciliatory attempt.<sup>326</sup> Then Kim sent a message to Washington that he had an advanced HEU program by revealing it to Siegfried Hecker, former director of the Los Alamos National Laboratory, and his colleagues from Stanford University on November 12, 2010. Hecker was granted access to view 2,000 centrifuges because North Korea “wanted the world to know,” and it trusted them “to report its nuclear advances...accurately.” Hecker was concerned the North Koreans would make more nuclear weapons with enriched uranium and perhaps even sell it for the right price.<sup>327</sup> Before the U.S. could react, the KPA attacked Yeongpyeong Island in late November 2010.<sup>328</sup> Three batteries of KPA multiple rocket launchers fired about 170 rounds towards the island.<sup>329</sup> (see Map 6.2 below). But why did it attack the Island?

According to Bechtol, one of the traits of North Korean provocations is that “North Korea denies responsibility for the event.”<sup>330</sup> In many cases this is

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<sup>324</sup> Chan, “The Incredible Shrinking Crisis,” pp.30-31.

<sup>325</sup> Oberdorfer and Carlin, *The Two Koreas*, p. 442.

<sup>326</sup> Chan, “The Incredible Shrinking Crisis,” pp. 30-31.

<sup>327</sup> Siegfried S. Hecker, “What I found in Yongbyon and Why It Matters.”

<sup>328</sup> Chan, “The Incredible Shrinking Crisis,” p. 31.

<sup>329</sup> Bechtol, *The Last Days of Kim Jong-Il*, p. 80.

<sup>330</sup> Bechtol, *The Last Days of Kim Jong-Il*, p. 58.

true as noted by the *Cheonan* incident, but as discussed in Chapter 5, there are some cases, such as the seizure of the USS Pueblo and the EC-121 shootdown, when Pyongyang is willing to accept responsibility. In the case of Yeonpyeong, it was prepared to justify its actions. This is demonstrated by a lengthy excerpt from a communique issued by Kim Jong-il on November 23:

The south Korean puppet group perpetrated such reckless military provocation as firing dozens of shells inside the territorial waters of the DPRK side around Yonphyong Islet in the West Sea of Korea from 13:00 on Nov. 23 *despite the repeated warnings* of the DPRK while staging the war maneuvers for a war of aggression on it codenamed Hoguk, escalating the tension on the Korean Peninsula...The revolutionary armed forces of the DPRK standing guard over the inviolable territorial waters of the country took such decisive military step as reacting to the military provocation of the puppet group with a prompt powerful physical strike. It is a traditional mode of counter-action of the army of the DPRK to counter the firing of the provocateurs with merciless strikes. Should the south Korean puppet group dare intrude into the territorial waters of the DPRK even 0.001 mm, the revolutionary armed forces of the DPRK will unhesitatingly continue taking merciless military counter-actions against it.<sup>331</sup>

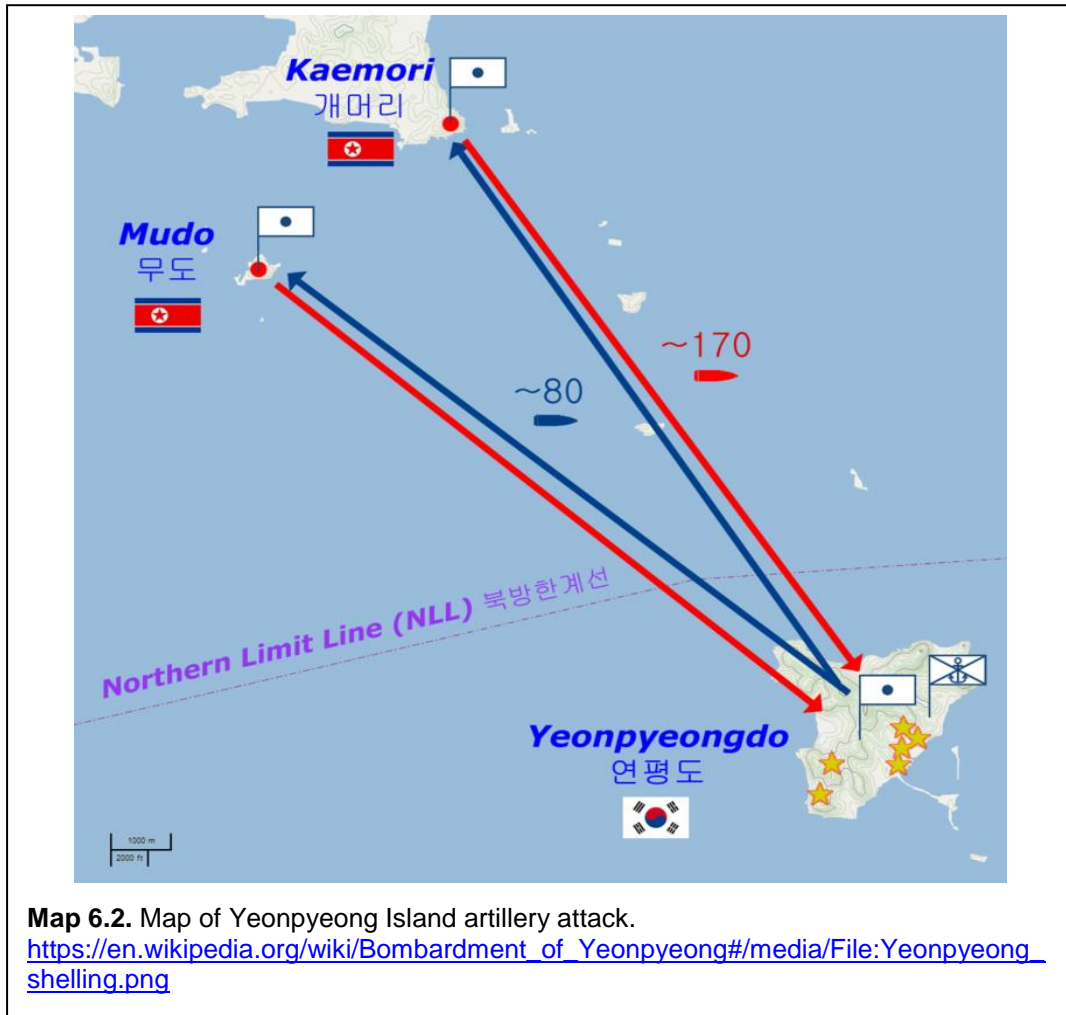
As shown, this was another carefully planned provocation that was directed by Kim Jong-il. He made it clear the KPA warned the South Korean military several times prior to the attack but these warnings were ignored. Thus, the KPA was justified to defend the North's sovereignty, which had been repeatedly violated. Yet, despite the carefully crafted argument about the defensive nature of the Yeonpyeong Island attack, one could not ignore it was the first artillery attack on South Korean civilians since the end of the Korean War<sup>332</sup> and killed two South Korean civilians, two Marines, and wounded 19 others.<sup>333</sup>

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<sup>331</sup> "KPA Supreme Command Issues Communique," Korea Central News Agency, November 23, 2010, <http://www.kcna.co.jp/index-e.htm> (accessed May 18, 2015)

<sup>332</sup> Chan, "The Incredible Shrinking Crisis," p. 29.

<sup>333</sup> Victor Cha and Ellen Kim, "A Tumultuous Ending of Year 2010," *Comparative Connections* January 2011, <http://csis.org/files/publication/1004q.pdf> (accessed February 12, 2012).



The brazen attack and ineffective response by the South resulted in slightly over 80 percent of South Koreans lamenting that “the South Korean government should have taken a strong military action in response to the North’s attack on the island. In the event of future provocations, 40.5 percent favored a limited military response and 25 percent favored strong retaliation with an all-out war mobilization.”<sup>334</sup> The growing pressure from the public and the realization that China’s priority interest vis-à-vis Korea remains “securing regime survival in Pyongyang,” even in the face of overwhelming evidence of its culpability, convinced Seoul to strengthen its alliance with the U.S. However,

<sup>334</sup> Victor Cha and Ellen Kim, “A Tumultuous Ending of Year 2010,” *Comparative Connections* January 2011, <http://csis.org/files/publication/1004q.pdf> (accessed February 12, 2012).

the show of alliance solidarity after the Cheonan Incident, including the July 2010 warning by the two allies' defense and foreign ministers that they would not tolerate Pyongyang's "irresponsible behavior," and the show of force deployment by the USS Washington aircraft carrier task force during the same month, did little to deter North Korean provocations.<sup>335</sup>

According to Chan, the question of why the North shelled the island baffled strategists in Seoul, Washington, and Beijing. As already mentioned, Seoul was poised to reengage Pyongyang just prior to the attack, and Beijing was pressuring the members of the 6PT to return to the talks as new revelations about Pyongyang's uranium enrichment program were disclosed following Hecker's visit to North Korea. Therefore, Lankov's argument that the aim of the provocation was to gain concessions<sup>336</sup> can also be ruled out for Yeonpyeong, and the evidence also challenges other interpretations that the North Koreans were crying out for attention or could actually have been threatened by the LFX near the NLL<sup>337</sup> (it occurs almost every month). A more likely explanation is that the two attacks were a single campaign designed to seek revenge for the November 2009 naval clash, which also tested its asymmetric capabilities and highlighted the cost of dismissing the Kim-Roh summit agreement of 2007. In the end, the Yeonpyeong attack facilitated the propaganda needed to promote the power succession after Kim Jong-un was designated as successor, and the effects of both provocations weakened Lee's hardline policy toward the North.

This argument is supported by reports that Kim Jong-il visited Beijing in August 2010 to gain China's endorsement for his succession plan with Kim Jong-un.<sup>338</sup> Simultaneously, he attempted to revive North Korea's relationship with China by portraying it "as a special, extraordinary, revolutionary friendship" on the occasion of the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Chinese intervention in the Korean War.<sup>339</sup> His son was soon anointed as the "Young General" in October

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<sup>335</sup> Chan, "The Incredible Shrinking Crisis," pp. 24-29.

<sup>336</sup> Lankov, *The Real North Korea*, pp. 174-176.

<sup>337</sup> Beck, "North Korea in 2010," p. 35.

<sup>338</sup> Chan, "The Incredible Shrinking Crisis," p.23.

<sup>339</sup> Kwon, "The Korean War and Sino-North Korean Friendship," pp. 1-12.



2010 during the 65<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the KWP. Kim Jong-un was with his father as he visited economic and military facilities and the North Korean media listed “him first among the officials accompanying his father.”<sup>340</sup> According to defectors, shortly after the Yeonpyeong attack, Kim Jong-un “was touted as an ‘artillery wizard’.”<sup>341</sup> In this context, one can see why Zhang Liangui from Beijing’s Central Party School argued Kim Jong-un initiated the provocations in 2010 to “mobilize the military and consolidate his power.”<sup>342</sup> Although North Korea adamantly denied responsibility for the sinking of the ship, it carefully planned the attack on the island and offered credible justification for it. Kim Jong-il declared for domestic and external audiences that the KPA was defending the North’s sovereignty as the South Koreans encroached upon its territory based on a unilateral declaration of the NLL as the de facto international boundary.<sup>343</sup> Moreover, North Korea even offered a half-hearted statement of regret on November 27 for the loss of civilian lives. Its state media also asserted the enemy “is now working hard to dramatize ‘civilian casualties’ as part of its propaganda campaign... If that is true, it is very regrettable but the enemy should be held responsible... [for] deploying civilians around artillery positions and inside military facilities before the launch of the provocation.”<sup>344</sup>

In the end, Seoul did not retaliate beyond returning artillery fire in self-defense,<sup>345</sup> and Chan concluded “*the greatest lesson learned from the Cheonan sinking may be that no act of North Korean intransigence is unforgivable.*”<sup>346</sup> When South Korea announced it would conduct another LFX in December, Admiral Michael Mullen, then-Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, was quickly dispatched to Seoul to “deliver a message of strong U.S. support, while seeking

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<sup>340</sup> Beck, “North Korea in 2010,” p. 37.

<sup>341</sup> Bechtol, *The Last Days of Kim Jong-il*, p. 81.

<sup>342</sup> John Garnaut, “North Korean dictator-in-waiting linked to deadly artillery attack,” *The Sydney Morning Herald*, November 24, 2010, <http://www.smh.com.au/world/north-korean-dictatorinwaiting-linked-to-deadly-artillery-attack-20101123-185p1.html> (accessed 16 May 2015)

<sup>343</sup> “KPA Supreme Command Issues Communique.”

<sup>344</sup> KCNA, “Who Is to Wholly Blame for Armed Clash in West Sea of Korea,” Korea Central News Agency, November 27, 2010, <http://www.kcna.co.jp/index-e.htm> (accessed May 18, 2015).

<sup>345</sup> Cha and Kim, “A Tumultuous Ending of Year 2010.”

<sup>346</sup> Chan, “The Incredible Shrinking Crisis,” p. 30.

to ensure the South Korean operation did not lead to escalation.”<sup>347</sup> This signalled Seoul’s new resolve to deter North Korean provocations as it conducted the LFX on December 20, 2010, despite Pyongyang’s threats to retaliate. It indicated South Korea was finally willing to risk escalation of the conflict to break the cycle of provocations.

The South’s initial steps were to establish a division-sized Northwestern Islands (NWI) Defense Command to protect the five remote islands near the NLL, changed the rules of engagement, developed U.S.-South Korea military plan to counter the North’s provocations, conducted joint military exercises,<sup>348</sup> prevent North Korea’s merchant ships from using South Korea’s sea-lanes, and declared it would resume psychological operations along the DMZ.<sup>349</sup> North Korea responded by declaring that the December LFX “was aimed at saving the face of the present puppet authorities now finding themselves in such profound ruling crisis...The revolutionary armed forces of the DPRK did not feel any need to retaliate against every despicable military provocation like one taking revenge after facing a blow.”<sup>350</sup> This was a rational choice since South Korea was prepared to respond to any North Korean provocations, but does the evidence suggest Kim exercised smart power during the two provocations in 2010?

#### **6.7.1 2010 Provocation Campaign Against Lee and for Succession**

First, what was Kim’s desired outcomes for the provocation campaign in 2010? As discussed, some have speculated that the two provocations were another attempt to gain concessions by resuming the cycle of provocations. However, the likely aim of the Cheonan sinking was to seek revenge for the 2009 naval clash by using the North’s asymmetric capabilities to deny culpability after the incident. The attack on the Cheonan also could have been a reminder to Lee Myung-bak that dismissing the 2007 Kim-Roh agreement was a mistake. Moreover, the Yeonpyeong Island attack facilitated the leadership

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<sup>347</sup> Bader, *Obama and China’s Rise*, pp. 90-91.

<sup>348</sup> Bechtol, *The Last Days of Kim Jong-Il*, p. 84.

<sup>349</sup> Cha, “The Aftermath of the Cheonan.”

<sup>350</sup> KCNA, “KPA Supreme Command: World Should Know Who Is Provoker,” December 27, 2010, <http://www.kcna.co.jp/index-e.htm> (accessed May 18, 2015).

succession process in North Korea by demonstrating that Kim Jong-un was to be admired and respected because he was capable of defending North Korea's sovereignty and weakened Lee's resolve to continue his hardline policy. Kim also attempted to improve relations with Beijing ahead of the leadership succession by highlighting the special relationship forged during the Korean War in October 2010. More importantly, Lee's poor handling of the provocations forced him to reconsider his hardline policy but the artillery attack on Yeonpyeong convinced many in South Korea that effective use of force will be necessary to break the cycle of provocations.

Second, which forms of power behavior was likely to succeed? North Korea used covert action to sink the Cheonan and refused to acknowledge the findings from a multilateral investigation that found it responsible for the incident. It might have assessed that it would be difficult for the subsequent investigation to produce conclusive evidence against North Korea due to the nature of the attack by a submarine. It may not have been a huge surprise for the Chinese and the Russians to back the North Koreans but many South Korean progressives were manipulated to believe Pyongyang was responsible for the attack. Kim probably understood that South Korean society was divided along progressive and conservative lines after a long decade of contested progressive rule. However, just as the crisis caused by the Cheonan incident was de-escalating, Pyongyang launched an artillery attack on a South Korean island. As before (e.g., USS Pueblo incident) it justified the attack by arguing self-defense because its territorial sovereignty was allegedly violated during a South Korean live fire exercise near the NLL. Kim may have been emboldened by the outcome of the Cheonan sinking to launch the artillery attack, and offered a half-hearted apology to control escalation. The Lee administration's failure to act decisively during the Yeonpyeong attack meant the loss of his credibility and eventually forced him to reconsider his hardline policy.

Third, what resources were available to support the attacks? North Korea had generally shown restraint during the decade of the Sunshine Policy because the progressive governments in Seoul were more than willing to offer

concessions for its good behavior. This was not the case with the Lee administration and Kim felt that the use of force was necessary to influence Lee's hardline approach. Nevertheless, he was careful to use covert action by using a submarine from the RGB to minimize the risk of South Korean retaliation. The success of the mission against the Cheonan led him to conduct a limited artillery attack to bolster his son's competence as the defender of North Korea's sovereignty. The South Korean military's response was poor and forced it to take bold measures such as the establishment of a new command to deal with North Korean threats against the Northwest Islands.

Fourth, what was Kim's assessment of the probability of success? Kim probably knew that attacking South Korean naval ships with his own (i.e., surface warfare) was a losing proposition as recently demonstrated by the 2009 naval clash. He correctly assessed that using covert assets from the RGB would improve his likelihood of success. In other words, he used his strengths of surprise and underwater warfare to defeat a much more capable South Korean surface navy. Even when the KPA engaged the South Korean military with artillery, they had the advantage of surprise and lengthy preparations. The South Korean military also exposed its lack of preparedness when it failed to respond effectively to the KPA's artillery attack.

Fifth, what were the policy preferences of key actors? President Lee Myung-bak's conservative government in Seoul ascended to power in February 2008 after a decade of progressive rule in the South. Lee believed his predecessors Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun's naïve engagement with the Pyongyang simply propped up the regime and increased the threat to Seoul's national security. Hence, Lee demanded North Korea take concrete measures to denuclearize before any further assistance would be provided to the North. Soon after President Obama was inaugurated in January 2009, Pyongyang attempted to coerce Seoul and Washington. It launched another satellite launch and conducted a second nuclear test in February and May 2009, respectively. This was followed by an announcement that the North would pursue its own LWR. These developments convinced Obama to pursue a

hardline policy and Kim Jong-il probably hoped to regain the initiative by hosting former President Clinton in Pyongyang in August 2009.

The North Koreans released the two American reporters during Clinton's visit, but the long awaited Kim-Clinton meeting failed to generate any momentum for diplomacy between the two sides. The North then reminded the U.S. that it had a HEU program in September 2009. Kim Jong-il then pursued diplomacy with Lee Myung-bak by proposing an inter-Korean summit, and the two Koreas initiated secret talks in October 2009. The talks broke down in November but tensions rose on the peninsula when the South Korean navy fired on a North Korean naval ship after it inadvertently crossed the NLL. This appears to have been the tipping point that set the stage for the covert sinking of the Cheonan in March 2010. In spite of the multilateral investigation's finding that North Korea was responsible for the attack on the Cheonan, both Moscow and Beijing were not convinced Kim was responsible for the attack.

The U.S. ignored them and reaffirmed its extended nuclear deterrence to Seoul, postponed the transfer of wartime OPCON from 2012 to 2015, and conducted combined ASW exercises with a U.S. aircraft carrier. Seoul reciprocated by finally joining the U.S.-led PSI. It also restricted trade with Pyongyang, but decided not to close the joint economic venture at Kaesong.

As the U.S.-South Korea alliance demonstrated its solidarity, some polls in South Korea suggested that the majority of South Koreans were not convinced North Korea was responsible for the sinking of the Cheonan. Lee's hardline policy was being questioned and eventually discredited when his ruling party suffered a major setback during the local elections in June 2010. The poor showing in the local election pressured Lee to soften his approach to Pyongyang. Meanwhile, Kim Jong-il visited Beijing in August to gain China's support for Kim Jong-un's succession. As pressure on Lee intensified in South Korea, he offered to provide almost \$9 million in humanitarian aid when North Korea suffered severe flooding in September 2010.

When the situation appeared to de-escalate, the KPA fired on Yeonpyeong Island in November and killed four South Koreans and wounded

almost twenty others. As Kim contemplated the artillery attack, he may have invited Hecker in November to reveal his HEU program to remind Washington that forceful response beyond self-defense would be counterproductive. The South Korean military responded poorly to the attack and U.S. signalled its primary aim was de-escalation when Admiral Mullen was dispatched to Seoul after the attack. On November 27, North Korea even offered a half-hearted statement of regret for the loss of civilian lives to deter South Korean retaliation. When South Korea decided to conduct another LFX in December, North Korea threatened to counter attack but it was manipulating Seoul because it knew the South Koreans were prepared to strike. The situation de-escalated but South Korea established a new NWI Command to deal with future provocations.

#### **6.7.2 Obama Re-engages Pyongyang but Kim Jong-il Dies**

It did not take too long after the provocations in 2010 before the U.S. reconsidered its position and resumed dialogue with the North Koreans. The momentum to resume talks began with the Russians announcing that North Korea was willing to consider “a moratorium on nuclear test and ballistic missile launches” and more in March 2011.<sup>351</sup> The U.S. invited Kim Kye-kwan to New York in July 2011 for an exploratory meeting with U.S. officials. This indicated Obama was growing uncomfortable with the so-called policy of “strategic patience” that resulted in the absence of diplomacy with Pyongyang and “prioritized the improvement of inter-Korean relations before any bilateral contact with the US or multilateral talks would resume.” Washington began to pressure Seoul to “stop obsessing about the apology for the Cheonan” as a precondition for dialogue. The U.S. chose to negotiate to deter provocations, fully recognizing Pyongyang had not shown any intention to denuclearize. Obama was probably concerned about the resumption of hostilities on the Peninsula as some in Seoul indicated they were ready to “clean North Korea’s clock” to “re-establish deterrence.”<sup>352</sup>

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<sup>351</sup> Oberdorfer and Carlin, *The Two Koreas*, p. 454.

<sup>352</sup> Cha and Kim, “A Return to Dialogue,” pp. 1-2.



By December 2011, diplomacy was in full swing and another nuclear deal was being finalized in Beijing even after the increased intensity of provocations in 2010. The deal would have been signed in December, but it was briefly suspended when Kim Jong-il died on December 19, 2011.<sup>353</sup> However, before he died many assumed he was unable to fully groom his son to assume power and North Korea would initially adopt a “collective” style of leadership consisting of his uncle Jang Sung-thaek, aunt Kim Kyong-hui, and General Ri Yong-ho, the Army Chief of Staff.<sup>354</sup> The assumption that Kim Jong-il would use the regency system was plausible since he had been groomed by his father for a long time. Within this context, it is plausible that the provocations in 2010 were executed to “establish the credentials of these new leaders, just as the Rangoon bombing in 1983 and the downing of a Korean Air

<sup>353</sup> Oberdorfer and Carlin, *The Two Koreas*, pp. 452-453.

<sup>354</sup> Beck, “North Korea in 2010,” pp. 37-38.

jet in 1987 can best be explained as efforts by Kim Jong-il to consolidate his own power.”<sup>355</sup> Perhaps most importantly, it would take well over 20 years after his succession before the U.S. would recognize Kim Jong-il as a competent and trustworthy leader.

## 6.8 Summary

First, the evidence suggests that Kim Il-sung and his son both understood the concept of smart power before its time, but Kim Jong-il was more effective in using his key institutions to develop smart power strategies. There are indications that he employed a situational leadership style, though he seems to have favored directing and coaching styles of leadership. The evidence suggests it is also plausible that Kim may have used supporting and delegating styles with a select group of trusted core elites and key bureaucrats (e.g., trusted members of the Three Revolutions Movement, members of the OGD, key KPA generals, and diplomats). He needed them to manage the key institutions and oversee the execution of approved strategies to achieve his aims. Second, North Koreans were able to exert influence over their targets of influence by offering a freeze of their nuclear program in the mid- to late-1990s, a self-imposed missile moratorium in 1999, exploiting familial ties of South Korean elites to the North, and a partial dismantlement of their plutonium program in 2007. However, they also used timely provocations along the NLL, missile launches, revelation of the HEU program, and nuclear tests to influence the policy preferences of others.

Third, Kim Jong-il earned his reputation as the leader who successfully “combined threats and assurances in a comprehensive strategy,” and “raised brinksmanship to an art form in order to gain multiple policy goals.”<sup>356</sup> He demonstrated this skill by securing agreements with three American presidents, two of whom pledged they would not negotiate with him unless he committed to

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<sup>355</sup> Beck, “North Korea in 2010,” p. 40.

<sup>356</sup> Klinger, “North Korea Heading for the Abyss,” pp. 175-176.



denuclearization prior to negotiations. Hence, he demonstrated he was even more capable than his father in exercising smart power.

Fourth, the successful application of smart power does not mean mistakes or some failures did not occur, such as the failure to understand the negative impact of the abductee issue with Japan, and back-peddling after initially dismissing Bush's offer not to attack North Korea in October 2003. What this demonstrates is that wielding smart power is difficult. It requires leadership at the highest levels and development of effective strategies that demonstrates understanding of contextual intelligence, imagination, flexibility, and rationale. In the end, if one is convinced Kim Il-sung is the one responsible for the collapse of North Korea's economy, Kim Jong-il may have survived, in part by using a mix of positive transformational and transactional leadership. This makes it plausible that the North Korean regime may experience instability without Kim Jong-il's leadership to direct and oversee smart power strategies. Next chapter examines the issue of continuity and change since Kim Jong-un's sudden rise to power in late 2011, and considers the prospects for his survival. What the evidence suggests is that he must prove his competence and at least some degree of benignity before the U.S. and others will take him seriously.

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## CHAPTER 7

### KIM JONG-UN'S *BYUNGJIN* REVIVAL OR SLOW DECAY?

*Kim [Jong-un] may be the undisputed captain of the North Korean ship, but that ship may be the Titanic. Kim Jong-un has maintained Kim Jong-il's foreign policy, but appears to be implementing it in a more volatile, reckless, and unpredictable manner. When compared to his father, Kim Jong-un seems amateurish and lacking his father's calculating, incremental approach toward achieving objectives. Indeed, it appears Jong-un may not have a game plan at all.*<sup>1</sup>

- Bruce Klingner

#### 7.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to examine the issue of continuity and change since Kim Jong-un's assumption of power in December 2011, and consider the prospects for regime survival. As the preceding chapter has shown, Kim Jong-il was well prepared to assume the reins of power, but some observers have recently concluded that Kim Jong-un's initial steps appeared to be amateurish and lacking his father's strategic acumen. That said, it begs the question whether Kim Jong-un can prove his detractors wrong and devise a successful strategy to prolong his rule. The evidence below suggests that after four years (as of December 2015), he may be in the final phase of power consolidation and has shown some indication that he is capable of exercising smart power. In addition to high-level purges (which is expected in North Korea during power consolidation), he has attempted to use Kim Il-sung's legacy and provocations to secure his legitimacy and to demonstrate his leadership, respectively. That said, I begin by highlighting how Kim Jong-un became the successor.

#### 7.2 Sudden Rise of Kim Jong-un and Truncated Succession Process

As we have seen, Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il both held extraordinary powers as the Supreme Leader. However, there was no guarantee that Kim

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<sup>1</sup> Klingner, "North Korea Heading for the Abyss," p. 175.

Jong-il could pass the mantle of familial rule to his son. Due to the dominant role of the leader of the regime, Kim Jong-un still has to show his potential as a worthy successor capable of leading and overseeing the regime's core institutions and elites. He must be able to construct his "own bases of support, a coalition that will forgo challenges in return for some quid pro quo in the form of policy, rents, or office."<sup>2</sup> Without Kim's own ability to lead and sustain the transfer of charismatic authority, he will be vulnerable to manipulation both from within the regime and without. The question is why he was selected as the successor and how does the regime justify his rule of the Kim Dynasty.

### **7.2.1 The Kim Family's Criteria for Choosing the Successor**

According to Kim Hak-joon, Kim Jong-il established several criteria for selecting his successor and began thinking about the succession process in 2002 (when he became 60 years old).<sup>3</sup> First, the successor had to be from the main branch of the Kim family, which means being a direct descendant of Kim Il-sung and his first wife Kim Jong-suk, who fought with him against the Japanese in Manchuria. As a result, even within the Kim family, the blood line was a discriminator and the successor had to have pure revolutionary blood. This ruled out the offspring of Kim Il-sung's second wife Kim Song-ae, who "had no connection with the anti-Japanese guerrilla movement."<sup>4</sup> Kim Jong-il's sister Kim Kyong-hui attacked her stepmother in front of Kim Il-sung's guerrilla comrades during his 60<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration in 1972. She argued that "the sacred position of the first lady was occupied by a woman who had no career in the anti-Japanese guerrilla movement," and the old guerrillas reportedly "wailed" and "cried out Kim Jong-suk's name."<sup>5</sup> His daughter's demonstration led Kim Il-sung to force his second wife to keep a lower public profile.<sup>6</sup> She briefly returned to the spotlight when former President Jimmy Carter went to North

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<sup>2</sup> Stephan Haggard, Luke Herman and Jaesung Ryu, "Political Change in North Korea: Mapping the Succession," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 54, No. 4 (July-August 2014), pp. 773-774.

<sup>3</sup> Choe, Shin, and Straub, *Troubled Transition*, pp. 41-47.

<sup>4</sup> Choe, Shin, and Straub, *Troubled Transition*, p. 41.

<sup>5</sup> Choe, Shin, and Straub, *Troubled Transition*, p. 42.

<sup>6</sup> Choe, Shin, and Straub, *Troubled Transition*, p. 42.

Korea to resolve the nuclear crisis in June 1994. However, when Kim Il-sung died in July 1994, only she was allowed to attend the funeral, not her sons, and she eventually disappeared from public view in 1997.<sup>7</sup>

After purging his stepmother from political life, Kim ensured his half-siblings from his father's other wives would not threaten his rule. Only those descendants from his parents and their offspring would be qualified to rule and that meant even Kim Il-sung's younger brother Yong-ju would have to be sidelined from politics. Kim Yong-ju had led the powerful OGD and served on the Politburo and the Party Secretariat, and as we have seen in Chapter 5, South Koreans assumed he had been anointed as Kim's successor. By 1974 his nephew managed to out-manuever him and he was banished from Pyongyang "to a local rehabilitation center on the pretext of 'curing his failing health'."<sup>8</sup> He was allowed to return to the capital in 1993 as a member of the Politburo and vice chairman of North Korea but his status was downgraded to "honorary vice-chairman" in 1999. Next, Kim Jong-il exiled most of his half-siblings from the "side-branches" to North Korea's diplomatic missions in Eastern Europe. As Kim's status as successor solidified in the late 1980s, Pyongyang's propagandists argued the successor had to come from the next generation and he was the only one qualified as the first son of Kim Il-sung and his first wife. The narrative also noted that "*the successor must be chosen within the party by the party,*" and highlighted the "principle of the party's primacy over the military."<sup>9</sup>

Kim Jong-il used these criteria and principles to select his own successor. He would choose one of his own sons since they were the only ones from the next generation with the pure blood of the original line of Kim Il-sung. The problem was his first son Kim Jong-nam was illegitimate since "his mother, Song Hye-rim, already had a daughter from her first marriage," and her *songbun* was also bad because she came from a wealthy family in South

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<sup>7</sup> Choe, Shin, and Straub, *Troubled Transition*, p. 42.

<sup>8</sup> Choe, Shin, and Straub, *Troubled Transition*, p. 42.

<sup>9</sup> Choe, Shin, and Straub, *Troubled Transition*, pp. 42-43.

Korea. To make matters worse, several members of her maternal family defected to the West. She was ultimately hidden from Kim Il-sung due to her poor *songbun*, and Kim was forced to marry Kim Yong-suk in October 1973. *They had a daughter named Kim Sul-song in 1974 and, based on the criteria and principles Kim Jong-il had established, she has the purest blood of all his children but her mother was not favored by him.*<sup>10</sup> Some argue that as the “purest of the pure bloods” Sul-song has significant influence within the regime as a mentor of Kim Jong-un’s sister Yo-jong as she expands her portfolio of managing the Kim family’s money and the regime’s security services.<sup>11</sup>

As Kim Jong-il’s wife’s health declined further in 1975, he sent Song to a hospital in Moscow and fell in love with Kim Jong-un’s mother Ko Young-hee. However, Ko also had bad *songbun* because her family was from a community of Korean residents in Japan (Chosen Soren) who returned to North Korea during the 1960s, and some members of her family also betrayed Kim by defecting to the U.S. That said, Ko was not married when Kim Jong-il met her and he was devoted to her for 28 years until her death in August 2004. She was honored with a burial in Pyongyang.<sup>12</sup>

Kim Jong-il had to choose between one of his sons with Ko, and their offspring would form the new patrilineal line of descent for the Kim regime. Kim had to choose between Jong-un and his older brother Jong-chol, and some claimed this was probably decided as early as 2003. According to this view, Jong-chol lacked ambition and Kim Jong-il had ruled him out as successor “since he is effeminate,” while Jong-un was more like his father. He apparently displayed as a young boy his “leadership [ability] and a strong desire to win,” and “a ruthlessness that Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il regarded as an important leadership attribute.”<sup>13</sup> However, according to Confucian tradition, his mother may have pushed for the older Jong-chul to become his father’s successor in

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<sup>10</sup> Choe, Shin, and Straub, *Troubled Transition*, pp. 30-49.

<sup>11</sup> Brian Todd, “Younger Sister of Kim Jong Un Gains Power in North Korea,” CNN, July 22, 2015, <http://edition.cnn.com/videos/us/2015/07/22/kim-jong-un-sister-north-korea-todd-dnt-tsr.cnn> (accessed July 24, 2015).

<sup>12</sup> Choe, Shin, and Straub, *Troubled Transition*, pp. 30-49.

<sup>13</sup> Choe, Shin, and Straub, *Troubled Transition*, p. 46.

2002. Kim may have indulged Ko by appointing Jong-chol as the vice director of the powerful OGD in July 2003, but by early 2006 he failed to meet his father's expectations. He reportedly fell out of favor when he was exposed at an Eric Clapton concert in Germany.<sup>14</sup>

Meanwhile, Kim Jong-il had visited China in mid-January 2006 and met with President Hu Jintao, who urged him to reform. Some argued Kim may have rehabilitated Jang Song-thaek in 2006 to help him "emulate China's economic policy," while others claimed Jang was needed to ensure a successful transfer of power to one of his sons.<sup>15</sup> The return of Jang was significant because Kim Jong-un's mother apparently had him purged in 2004 after foreign media reported that Jang was the most likely successor if the regime suddenly collapsed. According to Kim Hak-joon, Ko relied on two powerful OGD first vice directors, Ri Je-gang and Ri Yong-chul, to attack Jang and his supporters. However, Ko passed away in 2004 and Kim Jong-il probably needed Jang as he began to groom Jong-un as his successor in 2006. Thus, it was not a major surprise when Jang returned from his brief hiatus to become the head of the administrative department, which oversaw the MSS, the MPS, the Central Prosecutor's Office, and the Central Court. As Jang began to assume administrative control of the security apparatus, the cult of personality began to embrace Kim Jong-un. The young Kim had graduated from the "Kim Il-sung Comprehensive Military University" on December 24, 2006, and was praised for his thesis on "the great theories of military strategy" advanced by both his father and grandfather. By the fall of 2007, Kim Jong-un's birth place was designated "as a historical site." The process of succession was accelerated in August 2008 when Kim Jong-il had a stroke. He informed the OGD and the KPA that he had chosen Kim Jong-un as his successor on January 8, 2009.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Choe, Shin, and Straub, *Troubled Transition*, pp. 46-50.

<sup>15</sup> Choe, Shin, and Straub, *Troubled Transition*, p. 49.

<sup>16</sup> Choe, Shin, and Straub, *Troubled Transition*, pp. 47-52.

### 7.2.2 Truncated Grooming Process and Leadership Development

When Kim Jong-un became the successor, Bruce Cumings argued “it is in his interest to lay low and gain experience, while seasoned old guard runs the country.”<sup>17</sup> Surprisingly, he seemed to be everywhere with his new wife Ri Sol-ju and attempted to show he was in charge. More importantly, unlike his father, “Jong-un is the spitting image of his grandfather when he came to power in the late 1940s, even to the point of shaving his sideburns up high.” (see Figure 7.1). It is almost as if the regime was trying to make up for his lack of experience and leadership by arguing that “the DNA passed uncontaminated” from Kim Il-sung to his grandson.<sup>18</sup> The regime was carefully crafting his image to exploit Kim Il-sung’s cult of personality. According to a recent survey of defectors, this strategy appears to be working because “a significant number of North Koreans feel much hope about the third incarnation of Kimhood, finding the young leader attractive and somewhat charismatic.”<sup>19</sup>



**Figure 7.1.** Photos of Kim Jong Un and his grandfather Kim Il-sung  
<http://search.aol.com/aol/image?q=photo+of+Kim+Jong-un+and+Kim+Il-sung&page=2&oreq=f32698ec3a9f491981bcf04df531eeeb&v t=na>

According to Kim Hak-joon, the first symbolic step in the grooming process was taken in early 2009. The regime reportedly designated “a special

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<sup>17</sup> Cumings, “The Kims’ Three Bodies,” pp. 217-218.

<sup>18</sup> Cumings, “The Kims’ Three Bodies,” pp. 217-218.

<sup>19</sup> Lankov, “Kim Jong Un’s popularity, explained.”



task force consisting of top experts in the fields of politics, economics, culture, and military affairs, most in their forties and fifties,” to prepare Kim Jong-un as the next Supreme Leader.<sup>20</sup> As discussed in Chapter 6, Pyongyang also conducted a space launch in February 2009 and a second nuclear test in May 2009, and some argued these provocations were “aimed at tightening national unity through the creation of national tension.”<sup>21</sup> In the midst of these provocative acts, the regime attempted to elevate the status of Kim Jong-un as the successor. Its Kim Jong-un promotion campaign included a song called “Footsteps,” which symbolized Kim following his father’s example as the Supreme Leader, and foreign missions in Pyongyang were notified of his official status as the successor. The regime also disseminated “leaflets and posters in an effort to sanctify Kim Jong-un.”<sup>22</sup> In March 2009, a month before the revision of the Constitution, Kim Jong-un was appointed as the minister of the MSS, the regime’s “core instrument for intelligence, coercion, and terror.”<sup>23</sup> Kim would get to know his key security personnel and learn how to wield coercive power. As discussed in Chapter 6, the regime also established the RGB to conduct a provocation campaign against the South in 2010.

In April 2009, North Korea updated its Constitution and began the preamble by exalting Kim Il-sung. It noted that “Comrade Kim Il-sung authored the immortal *Juche* idea and, by organizing and leading the anti-Japanese revolutionary struggle under its banner, created the glorious revolutionary traditions and achieved the historic cause of national restoration.” He was also credited with “developing the Republic into a socialist country centred on the masses, into a socialist State which is independent, self-sufficient and self-reliant in defense.” Furthermore, it claimed Kim “always mixed with the people, devoted his whole life to them and turned the whole of society into a large family which is united in one mind.” Since he lacked legitimacy, it implied Kim Jong-un would try to emulate his grandfather. Kim Il-sung was also hailed for “*regarding*

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<sup>20</sup> Choe, Shin, and Straub, *Troubled Transition*, p. 51.

<sup>21</sup> Choe, Shin, and Straub, *Troubled Transition*, p. 52.

<sup>22</sup> Choe, Shin, and Straub, *Troubled Transition*, p. 52.

<sup>23</sup> Choe, Shin, and Straub, *Troubled Transition*, p. 52.

*the reunification of the country as the supreme national task.*"<sup>24</sup> This suggested reunification would remain an aspirational goal of the regime.

The Constitution also reaffirmed that, as the Chairman of the NDC, Kim Jong-il is the Supreme Leader of the nation and "the supreme commander of the whole armed forces."<sup>25</sup> As the Supreme Leader, Kim approved the appointment of Jang Song-thaek as a member of the NDC, and some argued this was done "to prevent and suppress any organized resistance to the consolidation of the succession regime, and that Jang would play a crucial role in the whole process of consolidation."<sup>26</sup> At the same time, the two senior OGD officials who helped Kim Jong-un's mother purge Chang in 2004 – Ri Yong-chul and Ri Je-gang – suddenly died in the spring of 2010. For example, "Ri Je-gang died in a car accident" just before Jang became a member of the NDC and led to speculation he was assassinated. These purges were followed by the promotion of Choe Ryong-hae, the oldest son of Kim Il-sung's guerrilla comrade Choe Hyun.<sup>27</sup> In hindsight, these purges of OGD officials may have indicated an ongoing power struggle between Jang and the OGD that started in 2004 and would not be settled until after Kim Jong-un assumed power.<sup>28</sup>

### **7.2.3 Death of Kim Jong-il and the Short Period of Regency**

After his father's death, there were several high-level military and party officials who were perceived as essential to Kim Jong-un's consolidation of power. Vice Marshal Ri Yong-ho, the chief of the KPA general staff, was supposed to be a guardian of Kim Jong-un but he was purged from all of his posts on July 16, 2012. However, General U Tong-chuk, vice director of the MSS and classmate of Kim Jong-il at Kim Il-sung University, was promoted as one of the vice-chairmen of the NDC. It was reportedly the first time an MSS official had been elevated to the NDC. When the former head of the MSS,

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<sup>24</sup> 2009 North Korean Constitution, [http://www.servat.unibe.ch/icl/kn00000\\_.html](http://www.servat.unibe.ch/icl/kn00000_.html) (accessed July 11, 2015).

<sup>25</sup> 2009 North Korean Constitution.

<sup>26</sup> Choe, Shin, and Straub, *Troubled Transition*, p. 51.

<sup>27</sup> Choe, Shin, and Straub, *Troubled Transition*, pp. 52-53.

<sup>28</sup> Oberdorfer and Carlin, *The Two Koreas*, pp. 452-453.

General Ryu Kyong, was executed in January 2011, General U became its new director. Kim also replaced Kim Yong-chun, the Minister of the People's Armed Forces, with General Kim Jong-gak. Kim Yong-chun had been a graduate of the elite Mankyongdae Revolutionary School, Kim Il-sung University, and the Soviet Military Academy in Frunze. He was an important supporter of Kim Jong-il's succession in the 1990s and remained a core member of the regime.<sup>29</sup> His replacement along with the other senior personnel moves suggested the regency period would be brief and more purges would follow.

Moreover, Kim Jong-un chose not to observe the three year mourning period when his father died, breaking from Confucian tradition that was observed after Kim Il-sung's death. He only waited several months before he assumed power and some interpreted this as a message that Kim Jong-un would be different and gave hope that "the golden age of Kim Il Sung would return."<sup>30</sup> Kim probably had no choice but to show some early wins to demonstrate his competence to become the Supreme Leader. That said, Kim initially appeared to honor the nuclear deal his father had approved in December 2011, but his plan to conduct another space launch spoiled the deal that he agreed to on February 29, 2012 (i.e., Leap Day Deal). The deal obligated North Korea to "implement a moratorium on long-range missile launches, nuclear tests and nuclear activities at Yongbyon."<sup>31</sup> The U.S. also expected Pyongyang to allow IAEA monitoring of its uranium program and the disabling of the 5MW reactors.<sup>32</sup> However, it was soon apparent that the deal was not what Kim was looking for to demonstrate his leadership credentials.

On March 16, 2012, North Korea's Committee for Space Technology announced that the "Kwangmyongsong-3, a polar-orbiting earth observation satellite, will be blasted off southward from Sohae Satellite Launching Station...

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<sup>29</sup> Choe, Shin, and Straub, *Troubled Transition*, pp. 54-55.

<sup>30</sup> Lankov, "Kim Jong Un's popularity, explained."

<sup>31</sup> Oberdorfer and Carlin, *The Two Koreas*, p. 454.

<sup>32</sup> Oberdorfer and Carlin, *The Two Koreas*, p. 454.

between April 12 and 16, lifted by carrier rocket Unha-3.”<sup>33</sup> Pyongyang was well aware of U.S. sensitivity toward another space launch. It carefully signaled the launch well in advance and claimed it “will strictly abide by relevant international regulations and usage concerning the launch of scientific and technological satellites for peaceful purposes and ensure maximum transparency.”<sup>34</sup> The North even took the unusual measure of opening its new launch facility on the west coast to the foreign media.<sup>35</sup> It also made it clear the launch trajectory would avoid Japan. When it failed on April 13, North Korea announced the “satellite had ‘failed to enter its preset orbit’.”<sup>36</sup> Pyongyang had been arguing all along that it had no reason to nullify the Leap Day Deal by launching a long-range missile, and claimed the launch was to commemorate the 100th birthday of Kim Il-sung on April 15, 1912.<sup>37</sup>

Nevertheless, this was a bit too convenient and convinced the U.S. that Pyongyang was not committed to denuclearization. The U.S. promptly abrogated the Leap Day Deal and pursued additional sanctions. However, it may have been a lost opportunity to at least freeze North Korea’s nuclear program and perhaps continue the dismantlement that Chris Hill had started. If lack of trust was an issue for both sides, they could have taken some measures to build trust. According to Roderick Kramer, these measures could have included sending “loud, clear, and consistent signals” instead of settling for ambiguous agreements. It also helps to have a “clearly articulated plan for disengagement” that is known to all in case someone cheats (i.e., escape clause), have empathy for the other side’s position, and constantly verify to ensure your trust is not violated.<sup>38</sup> In short, it would have been prudent to ensure each other’s positions were made clear to the other side before the deal

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<sup>33</sup> KCNA, “DPRK to Launch Application Satellite,” March 16, 2012, <http://www.kcna.co.jp/index-e.htm> (accessed June 22, 2015).

<sup>34</sup> KCNA, “DPRK to Launch Application Satellite.”

<sup>35</sup> Oberdorfer and Carlin, *The Two Koreas*, pp. 453-455.

<sup>36</sup> Oberdorfer and Carlin, *The Two Koreas*, pp. 453-455.

<sup>37</sup> KCNA, “U.S. Should Not Apply Double Standards to DPRK’s Satellite Launch,” March 27, 2012, <http://www.kcna.co.jp/index-e.htm> (accessed November 11, 2014).

<sup>38</sup> Roderick M. Kramer, “Rethinking Trust,” *Harvard Business Review*, June 2009, pp. 3-9.

was made – there should not have been any confusion about the consequences of the space launch since it was also a problem in 2009.

In May 2012, North Korea revised its Constitution again and proclaimed, “In the face of the collapse of the world socialist system and the vicious offensive of the imperialist allied forces to stifle the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, Comrade Kim Jong-il administered *Songun* politics; thus he safeguarded with honour the achievements of socialism which are the precious legacy of Comrade Kim Il-sung.” Kim Jong-il was also credited with developing North Korea as “a nuclear state and an unchallengeable military power.” Kim Jong-il was thus granted the title of the “Eternal Chairman” of the NDC and Kim Jong-un was given the new title of “First Chairman” of the NDC.<sup>39</sup> What this indicated was that to bolster his lack of legitimacy, Kim Jong-un would justify his policies by recalling existing policies and accomplishments of his forefather’s.

On August 12, 2012, North Korea’s Foreign Ministry attempted to defend its sovereign right to a space program. The Foreign Ministry asserted, “It is true that both satellite carrier rocket and missile with warhead use the similar technology. However, when other countries conduct satellite launch, the U.S. neither takes an issue with any of it, calling it a missile launch, nor takes actions like imposing sanctions.”<sup>40</sup> The point was that Washington viewed its “satellite carrier rocket as a long-range missile” as a threat because it viewed North Korea as an enemy. Pyongyang also revealed part of its decision-making process when the Obama administration first objected to the launch of the “Kwangmyongsong 2” satellite in 2009. The regime argued it felt compelled to respond with a second nuclear test, and when the U.S. levied more sanctions after the nuclear test, Pyongyang started to build its LWR.<sup>41</sup>

The North claimed, “The respected Marshall Kim Jong Un wants to open up a new chapter for the development of relations with the countries friendly

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<sup>39</sup> Constitution of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (2012), [https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Constitution\\_of\\_the\\_Democratic\\_People%27s\\_Republic\\_of\\_Korea\\_\(2012\)](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Constitution_of_the_Democratic_People%27s_Republic_of_Korea_(2012)) (accessed July 12, 2015).

<sup>40</sup> KCNA, “DPRK Terms U.S. Hostile Policy Main Obstacle in Resolving Nuclear Issue,” August 31, 2012, <http://www.kcna.co.jp/index-e.htm> (accessed November 11, 2014).

<sup>41</sup> KCNA, “DPRK Terms U.S. Hostile Policy Main Obstacle in Resolving Nuclear Issue.”

towards us, *unbound to the past.*” It also reminded the U.S. that Kim Jong-il was serious about improving relations with the U.S. in the late 1990s. Subsequently, it presented the U.S. with two choices. One option is to get rid of its Cold War mentality and “renounce its anachronistic policy toward the DPRK.” The other option is for Washington to continue its hostile policy, and North Korea will respond in kind. In the end, it warned the U.S., if it failed to address its hostile policy, North Korea would keep its nuclear weapons and modernize and expand “its nuclear deterrent capability beyond the U.S. imagination.”<sup>42</sup>



**Figure 7.2.** North Korean propaganda leaflet post card obtained by Group Captain Athol Forrest, NZ Air Force, Retired, from his daughter who had visited Pyongyang on a tour in October 2015. The poster says "responding to [U.S.] hardline with super hardline." (Translated by author).

The U.S. and others in the international community ignored the threat from Pyongyang and issued another UNSC resolution to censure North Korea

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<sup>42</sup> KCNA, “DPRK Terms U.S. Hostile Policy Main Obstacle in Resolving Nuclear Issue,” August 31, 2012, <http://www.kcna.co.jp/index-e.htm> (accessed November 11, 2014).

after the December 2012 space launch. The resolution targeted key personnel involved in Pyongyang's nuclear and missile programs and levied international pressure to deter further testing of its missiles. Similar to what occurred in 2009, North Korea responded to the sanctions by conducting a third nuclear test on February 13, 2013. After the test, it claimed it had "miniaturized" a nuclear device in "a safe and perfect manner."<sup>43</sup> The problem for the U.S. is that the provocations did not end with the reported miniaturization test as its forces began to prepare for its annual training exercise with the South Koreans.

### **7.3 Kim Responds to Military Exercises in the South to Consolidate Power**

On March 7, 2013, North Korea condemned the combined U.S.-South Korea military exercise FOAL EAGLE that was being conducted from March 1 to April 30. The KCNA commentary highlighted that many U.S. "ultra-modern nuclear war means," such as a nuclear aircraft carrier, B-52 bombers, and F-22 stealth fighters were going to be involved in the exercises. The KCNA took issue with South Korean claims that "B-52 and F-22 are 'capable of preempting an attack on the abode of the headquarters of the north' being undetected by radar." It concluded, "This proves that the on-going drills are an unpardonable terrorist act and a drill for preemptive nuclear attack aimed at harming the headquarters of the revolution and the social system in the DPRK."<sup>44</sup>

On March 9, 2013, KCNA claimed that many South Korean civic groups opposed large U.S. military exercises in the South, and highlighted two other military exercises called KEY RESOLVE and ULCHI FREEDOM GUARDIAN, and claimed they prove that "the Korean War has not yet ended."<sup>45</sup> On the same day, the UNSC passed another resolution to sanction North Korea for the third nuclear test. Pyongyang viewed it as violation of its sovereignty and

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<sup>43</sup> Lee Hong Yung, "North Korea in 2013: Economy, Executions, and Nuclear Brinksmanship," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 54, No. 1 (2014), pp. 91-92.

<sup>44</sup> KCNA, "KCNA Commentary Warns U.S., S. Korean Warmongers Not to Wage War Drills Targeting DPRK's Headquarters and Social System," March 7, 2013, <http://www.kcna.us/2013/03/07/news-14/> (accessed September 26, 2015).

<sup>45</sup> KCNA, "US-S. Korea Joint War Drills Condemned," March 9, 2013, <http://www.kcna.us/2013/03/09/news-08/> (accessed September 26, 2015).



claimed it was an unjust action led by the U.S. and the resolution would only heighten North Korea's "anti-U.S. and anti-imperialist sentiments." This would motivate the North Korean people and the KPA to strengthen the defensive oriented nuclear deterrent to counter U.S.-led provocations.<sup>46</sup> Next, the North continued to characterize the combined exercise in South Korea as the "largest-ever nuclear war maneuvers" preparing to topple the regime. It followed this up by nullifying the Korean Armistice Agreement as well as all existing North-South agreements of non-aggression.<sup>47</sup> The Supreme Command placed the entire country on war footing on March 11, 2013,<sup>48</sup> and Kim visited a KPA unit near the DMZ to demonstrate his leadership.<sup>49</sup> The stage was set for Kim to show his ability to defend the sovereignty of North Korea against the U.S. imperialists.

### **7.3.1 North Korea Claims It Possesses a Nuclear ICBM Capability**

On March 20, 2013, North Korea's Foreign Ministry mentioned the B-52 deployments to Korea. It manipulated the B-52 sorties on March 8 and 19 by characterizing it as "an unpardonable provocation" to demonstrate U.S. strategic nuclear strike capabilities even as the situation on the Korean Peninsula was "inching close to the brink of war."<sup>50</sup> The next day, Pyongyang also underscored the deployment of nuclear submarines and aircraft carriers, and highlighted the fact that in the past U.S. deployment of nuclear strike capabilities had been kept secret. Although B-52s were overtly deployed after the ax murders,<sup>51</sup> it argued the public disclosure of B-52 flights confirmed it was "an open nuclear threat to the DPRK." North Korea warned, "If the U.S. sends B-52 to Korea again, it will meet catastrophic end by the strong military

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<sup>46</sup> KCNA, "US-S. Korea Joint War Drilled Condemned."

<sup>47</sup> KCNA, "US, S. Korea to Be Held Accountable for Catastrophic Consequences," March 11, 2013, <http://www.kcna.us/2013/03/11/news-29/> (accessed September 26, 2015).

<sup>48</sup> KCNA, "DPRK People in War Posture," March 11, 2013, <http://www.kcna.us/2013/03/11/news-24/> (accessed September 26, 2015).

<sup>49</sup> KCNA, "DPRK Servicepersons Inspired by Kim Jong Un's Inspection," March 12, 2013, <http://www.kcna.us/2013/03/12/news-24/> (accessed September 26, 2015).

<sup>50</sup> KCNA, "DPRK FM Spokesman Accuses U.S. of Letting Strategic Bomber Make Sortie to Korean Peninsula," March 20, 2013, <http://www.kcna.us/2013/03/20/news-01/> (accessed September 26, 2015).

<sup>51</sup> Kirkbride, *DMZ: A Story of the Panmunjom Axe Murder*, p. 120.



counteraction of the DPRK.”<sup>52</sup> The Supreme Command emphasized that the B-52 deployment from Guam on March 25 conducted simulated nuclear strikes against North Korea and its targets included North Korea’s supreme leadership. These provocations proved the U.S. and its allies were exploiting the space launch and the nuclear test as pretext to pursue hostile activities. It vowed to “take counteraction to defend the sovereignty and dignity of the supreme leadership.”<sup>53</sup>

As tensions continued to rise, the U.S.-South Korea alliance completed the combined Counter-Provocation plan in March 2013 to respond more effectively to North Korean provocations.<sup>54</sup> On March 28, Pyongyang reacted by stating that the “keynote of the war scenario called ‘joint operational plan’ is that the south Korean puppet forces and the U.S. imperialist aggression forces would jointly counter the DPRK’s ‘provocation of a local war’.” Pyongyang argued this plan was developed by the “U.S. and the puppet warmongers” to trigger a nuclear war on the Korean Peninsula.<sup>55</sup> When the U.S. decided to deploy a B-2 stealth bomber to fly over Korea for the first time on March 28, Kim Jong-un called an urgent operational meeting the following day to discuss the KPA’s Strategic Rocket Force’s readiness to conduct “firepower strikes.” North Korea also indicated the U.S. had defied the “meaningful warning” made by the Supreme Command of the KPA on March 26 to halt the provocations. Kim reportedly said at the meeting, “If they make a reckless provocation with huge strategic forces, the KPA should mercilessly strike the U.S. mainland, their stronghold, their military bases in the operational theaters in the Pacific, including Hawaii and Guam, and those in south Korea.” After receiving

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<sup>52</sup> KCNA, “U.S. B-52 Bomber’s Flight to Korean Peninsula Slammed,” March 21, 2013, <http://www.kcna.us/2013/03/21/news-20/> (accessed September 26, 2015).

<sup>53</sup> KCNA, “DPRK Will Show Its Will for Counteraction with Military Action: KPA Supreme Command,” March 26, 2013, <http://www.kcna.us/2013/03/26/news-30/> (accessed September 26, 2015).

<sup>54</sup> Joint Communique, The 45<sup>th</sup> ROK-U.S. Security Consultative Meeting, October 2, 2013, [http://www.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/Joint%20Communique\\_%2045th%20ROK-U.S.%20Security%20Consultative%20Meeting.pdf](http://www.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/Joint%20Communique_%2045th%20ROK-U.S.%20Security%20Consultative%20Meeting.pdf) (accessed September 26, 2015).

<sup>55</sup> KCNA, “Rodong Sinmun Accuses U.S., S. Korea of Their Joint Operational Plan,” March 28, 2013, <http://www.kcna.us/2013/03/28/news-14/> (accessed September 26, 2015).

operational updates on the nuclear threats from the U.S. and the “technical conditions of the strategic strike means of the KPA,” Kim signed the plan for the KPA to standby to fire its nuclear ICBMs.<sup>56</sup> The ensuing mass rally in Pyongyang called for a “final decisive battle against the aggressors including the U.S. imperialists and the south Korean group of traitors.”<sup>57</sup>

On March 30, 2013, North Korea declared Kim’s decision to prepare for “do-or-die battle” to end the “long-standing showdown with the U.S.” would open a new era. Under his rule, the U.S. would no longer threaten North Korea with nuclear weapons. It boasted hostile forces “should clearly know that in the era of Marshal Kim Jong Un, the greatest-ever commander, all things are different from what they used to be in the past.” It also warned, Pyongyang “will immediately punish any slightest provocation hurting its dignity and sovereignty with resolute and merciless physical actions without any prior notice.”<sup>58</sup> This warning was accompanied by another one claiming that the future of the KIC will depend on the behavior of puppets in Seoul and their reactionary media. North Korea took issue with the South Korean claims that the KIC was kept open because of the money. It asserted that North Korea kept it open because of its concern over South Korean businesses that would face bankruptcy.<sup>59</sup>

The Central Committee of the KWP adopted a new strategic line on March 31, 2013, aimed to expand the regime’s nuclear capabilities as well as its economic development (i.e., *Byungjin* line).<sup>60</sup> (see Appendix E). Perhaps more importantly, the regime also revealed that the *Byungjin* line was initiated by Kim Il-sung in 1962. This inexorably legitimized the policy and signalled Kim Jong-

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<sup>56</sup> KCNA, “Kim Jong Un Convenes Operation Meeting, Finally Examines and Ratifies Plan for Firepower Strike,” March 29, 2013, <http://www.kcna.us/2013/03/29/news-01/> (accessed September 26, 2015).

<sup>57</sup> KCNA, “Pyongyangites Meet to Support Statement of KPA Supreme Command,” March 29, 2013, <http://www.kcna.us/2013/03/29/news-27/> (accessed September 26, 2015).

<sup>58</sup> KCNA, “North-South Relations Have Been Put at State of War: Special Statement of DPRK,” March 30, 2013, <http://www.kcna.us/2013/03/30/news-07/> (accessed September 26, 2015).

<sup>59</sup> KCNA, “DPRK Warns Future of Kaesong Industrial Zone Depends on S. Korea’s Attitude,” March 30, 2013, <http://www.kcna.us/2013/03/30/news-29/> (accessed September 26, 2015).

<sup>60</sup> KCNA, “New Strategic Line, Succession of Line of Simultaneously Developing Economy and Defense,” April 1, 2013, <http://www.kcna.us/2013/04/02/news-27/> (accessed September 26, 2015).

un would also favor improving national defense in order to “build a powerful socialist nation.”<sup>61</sup> In other words, unless he has the resources to do both, he is likely to revive his grandfather’s policy that favored security over the economy. On April 1, Pyongyang attempted to garner sympathy for its claim for future space launches by establishing the State Space Development Bureau. It disclosed its aim to become a “world-class space power by exercising its legitimate right to space development for peaceful purposes.”<sup>62</sup>

The SPA concurrently passed a law stating that North Korea “is a full-fledged nuclear weapons state.” It claimed its nuclear weapons were a “just means for defence” and served “the purpose of deterring and repelling the aggression and attack of the enemy against the DPRK and dealing deadly retaliatory blows at the strongholds of aggression until the world is denuclearized.”<sup>63</sup> After justifying its space and nuclear programs, North Korea continued to escalate tensions by shutting down the KIC on April 8. The North cited “a string of invectives hurting the dignity of the DPRK, talking about ‘source of money,’ ‘detention’ and ‘hostages,’” as justification for withdrawing all of its workers from the KIC. It reminded Seoul that the complex was built to symbolize both sides desire for “reconciliation, cooperation and reunification,” but it had become “a theater of confrontation between compatriots and war against the north.” It also asserted Pyongyang “gets few economic benefits from the zone” and had to make a significant concession by providing a large area of “military strategic importance” to establish the complex.<sup>64</sup>

Kim subsequently visited several military units and deployed his “missile units to the eastern coast.” Some observers speculated the deployed missiles were targeting Guam.<sup>65</sup> On April 4, Seoul “confirmed that Pyongyang has moved a missile with ‘considerable range’ to its east coast.” This confirmation

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<sup>61</sup> KCNA, “New Strategic Line, Succession of Line of Simultaneously Developing Economy and Defense.”

<sup>62</sup> KCNA, “DPRK SPA Decides to Set Up State Space Development Bureau,” April 1, 2013, <http://www.kcna.us/2013/04/01/news-17/> (accessed September 26, 2015).

<sup>63</sup> KCNA, “Law on Consolidating Position of Nuclear Weapons State Adopted.”

<sup>64</sup> KCNA, “Important Steps Declared as Regards Kaesong Industrial Zone,” April 8, 2013, <http://www.kcna.us/2013/04/08/news-27/> (accessed September 26, 2015).

<sup>65</sup> Lee, “North Korea in 2013,” pp. 92-93.

from Seoul came after the KPA had “announced it had been authorised to attack the US using ‘smaller, lighter and diversified’ nuclear weapons.” Some in Japan began to speculate “the missile could be a KN-08, which is believed to be a long-range [mobile] missile that – if operable – could hit the US.”<sup>66</sup> As tensions began to rise, some noticed the Chinese were seriously considering “how severe its sanctions on Pyongyang should be while not forcing the collapse of the North Korean regime.” Beijing stated it “was strongly dissatisfied with and firmly opposed” the nuclear test but, as before, it also encouraged Pyongyang and Washington “to make concessions to achieve a negotiated settlement.”<sup>67</sup> When Kerry visited Seoul on April 12, he reassured South Korea, and warned, “North Korea will not be accepted as a nuclear power.”<sup>68</sup>

Meanwhile, these nuclear provocations led to more speculation in Washington that “North Korea may have the ability to deliver a nuclear weapon on a missile” and senior U.S. officials were trying to downplay the North Korean threat. However, by this time the media had disclosed that DIA “assessed with ‘moderate confidence’ that North Korea has the ability to deliver a nuclear weapon with a ballistic missile, though the reliability is believed to be ‘low’.”<sup>69</sup> On April 18, 2013, President Obama refuted DIA’s claim by stating “he doesn’t believe North Korea can fit a nuclear warhead on a missile.” That said, he indicated he had to heighten the U.S.’s defensive posture by deploying missile defense systems to Guam “to guard against any miscalculation on their part.” Obama was aware of North Korea’s use of provocations to achieve its aims, and reiterated the point that “since I came into office, the one thing I was clear about was, we’re not going to reward this kind of provocative behavior. You don’t get to bang your spoon on the table and somehow you get your way.”<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Roberts and McCurry, “U.S. defends military deployments in response to North Korea threats.”

<sup>67</sup> Lee, “North Korea in 2013,” pp. 92-93.

<sup>68</sup> KCNA, “S. Korea Denounced for Making Public Decision to Do Away with KIZ,” April 27, 2013, <http://www.kcna.us/2013/04/27/news-15/> (accessed September 26, 2015).

<sup>69</sup> Jill Dougherty, “Kerry visits South Korea amid North Korea’s nuclear threats,” CNN, April 11, 2013, <http://www.cnn.com/2013/04/11/world/asia/south-korea-kerry-trip/> (accessed July 14, 2015).

<sup>70</sup> Jethro Mullen, “Obama says he doesn’t believe North Korea has nuclear missile,” CNN, April 17, 2013, <http://www.cnn.com/2013/04/17/world/asia/koreas-tensions/> (accessed July 14, 2015).

Despite Obama's hardline approach, Kerry was attempting to find a diplomatic way out of the situation as he visited Seoul, Tokyo, and Beijing. He set preconditions for talks by stating, "The North has to move toward denuclearization, indicate a seriousness in doing so by reducing these threats, stop the testing and indicate it's actually prepared to negotiate." However, North Korea called this a "crafty ploy" by the U.S. and claimed it can only pursue talks when it "has acquired nuclear deterrent enough to defuse the U.S. threat of nuclear war unless the U.S. rolls back its hostile policy and nuclear threat and blackmail" against Pyongyang.<sup>71</sup> Kerry called on China to "put some teeth' into efforts to press Pyongyang to abandon its nuclear ambitions," and cautioned "if North Korea's 30-year-old leader went ahead with the launch, 'he will be choosing, willfully, to ignore the entire international community'".<sup>72</sup>

On May 1, Kim visited the MPS to encourage the personnel to continue "defending the party, social system and people in their struggle to decisively foil the enemies' moves to stifle the DPRK."<sup>73</sup> After Kim met with the member of his internal security forces, North Korea accused the U.S. and South Korea of provoking the North again with a live fire and anti-submarine warfare exercises on May 5 in the West Sea. It warned that even if "a single shell drops over the territorial waters of the north during the provocative shelling drills," the KPA will respond with "a prompt counteraction."<sup>74</sup> On May 13, Pyongyang announced that it would never give up its eternal treasure of the nation – its nuclear weapons. It stated, "*There have been big and small wars in the world for nearly seven decades since the appearance of nuclear weapons but nuclear weapons states have never been exposed to any war.*" Under Kim, North Korea claimed it now possessed "smaller, lighter and diversified powerful nuclear deterrence." As a result, the U.S. could no longer threaten it with nuclear weapons, and

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<sup>71</sup> Mullen, "Obama says he doesn't believe North Korea has nuclear missile."

<sup>72</sup> Arshad Mohammed and Jack Kim, "U.S. tells North Korea new missile launch would be 'huge mistake'," Reuters, April 13, 2013, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/04/13/us-korea-north-idUSBRE93408020130413> (accessed July 14, 2015).

<sup>73</sup> KCNA, "Kim Jong Un Visits Ministry of People's Security," May 1, 2013, <http://www.kcna.us/2013/05/01/news-15/> (accessed September 26, 2015).

<sup>74</sup> KCNA, "U.S., S. Korean Warmongers Urged to Heed KPA's Warning," May 7, 2013, <http://www.kcna.us/2013/05/07/news-13/> (accessed September 26, 2015).

Pyongyang's "nukes can never be a bargaining chip under any circumstances as they are stipulated by a law of the DPRK." Nevertheless, it appeared to leave open the prospect of denuclearization by stating, "There can be no discussion on the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula unless the U.S. rolls back its hostile policy toward the DPRK and defuses its nuclear threat."<sup>75</sup>

On May 22, Kim Jong-un sent his special envoy Vice Marshal Choe Ryong-hae to Beijing.<sup>76</sup> Choe met with Fan Changlong, member of the Political Bureau and the vice-chairman of the Central Military Commission (CMC) on May 24 to convey the message that "the friendship between the DPRK and China was sealed in blood in the hard-fought battlefields including the anti-Japanese war, the war for liberating Northeast China and the Fatherland Liberation War, adding that it is an issue of particular importance in defending socialism in the two countries to boost the exchange and cooperation between the two armies." Both sides apparently agreed to improve military relations.<sup>77</sup> Cho also met with Xi Jinping during the visit and stated, "The Chinese party and government have consistently supported the building of a thriving socialist nation of Korean style," and wished North Korea well in "developing the economy and improving the standard of people's living."<sup>78</sup>

Vice Marshal Choe's visit to China seemed to de-escalate the situation on the Peninsula as North Korea chose not to launch its deployed missiles. However, readout from his meeting with Xi suggested that the Chinese leader sent a strong message for North Korea to abandon its nuclear weapons and return to talks. Subsequently, more North Korean officials visited China for "strategic dialogue" and Li Yuanchao, China's Vice President, visited North Korea in July 2013 to celebrate the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Korean War

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<sup>75</sup> KCNA, "Nuclear Deterrence Serves as Treasure Common to Nation: Rodong Sinmun," May 13, 2013, <http://www.kcna.us/2013/05/13/news-07/> (accessed September 26, 2015).

<sup>76</sup> KCNA, "Kim Jong Un's Special Envoy Leaves for China," May 22, 2013, <http://www.kcna.us/2013/05/22/news-04/> (accessed September 26, 2015).

<sup>77</sup> KCNA, "Choe Ryong Hae Meets Fan Changlong," May 24, 2013, <http://www.kcna.us/2013/05/24/news-25/> (accessed September 26, 2015).

<sup>78</sup> KCNA, "Chinese President Xi Jinping Meets Choe Ryong Hae," May 24, 2013, <http://www.kcna.us/2013/05/24/news-28/> (accessed September 26, 2015).

Armistice. Some observers were convinced China was finally using its leverage to influence North Korea. They speculated Kim may have expressed regret that he “had been too harsh toward the United States and South Korea,” and supported Beijing’s efforts to resume 6PT. Pyongyang then resumed talks with Seoul and agreed to reopen the KIC.<sup>79</sup> That was sufficient to de-escalate the situation in Korea for the remainder of 2013. In the end, missile deployment to the east coast was only a demonstration of force, but the issue of North Korea’s nuclear ICBMs would become a potential survival interest for the U.S.

### **7.3.2 North’s Nuclear ICBM Capability: Potential for Miscalculation**

While from Pyongyang’s perspective it may be rational to counter that the fall of Qaddafi was a ruse by the U.S. to disarm and overthrow rogue states, and justify its effort to expand its nuclear deterrent,<sup>80</sup> this could be a serious miscalculation. Admittedly, the U.S. has traditionally avoided the use of force against Pyongyang since the end of the Korean War, but it may not be able to ignore a direct threat to the homeland from North Korea’s nuclear ICBMs. Thus, while Pyongyang’s nuclear capabilities may have deterred the use of force against the regime, one could just as easily argue its conventional forces have served this role equally as well.<sup>81</sup> The Kim regime must realize that by continuing to expand its nuclear weapon and missile programs it invites more intense international pressure.

The question is, despite its rational calculus (from its perspective), when does a nuclear deterrent no longer serve as an effective deterrent for a rogue state? What if Pyongyang’s nuclear strategy is to use its nuclear weapons (i.e., sword)? If the intent is to use nuclear weapons either to prevent U.S. intervention in Korea during a major crisis<sup>82</sup> or to credibly threaten nuclear

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<sup>79</sup> Lee, “North Korea in 2013,” pp. 94-95.

<sup>80</sup> Cha, *The Impossible State*, pp. 238-240.

<sup>81</sup> David Kang, “Washington’s Response to an Operationally Nuclear North Korea,” pp. 150-151.

<sup>82</sup> Victor Cha, “North Korea’s Weapons of Mass Destruction: Badges, Shields, or Swords?” *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 117, No. 2, Summer 2002, p. 223.



strikes on the U.S.,<sup>83</sup> that would be a serious mistake. By the end of May 2009, former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates declared, “We will not stand idly by as North Korea builds the capability to wreak destruction on any target in the region — or on us.”<sup>84</sup> However, Pyongyang ignored Gates’ warning by raising the stakes with more provocations in 2010, and when he attended the “two plus two” meeting in Seoul with Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in mid-July 2010, some in the South Korean military viewed the attacks in 2010 “as a turning point in the history of the South’s national defense.” The North forced Seoul to consider offensive deterrence, which would demonstrate its willingness to use deep-strike capabilities to threaten the North’s leadership in Pyongyang.<sup>85</sup>

As a result, it is more than plausible to suggest if and when Washington decides to use force to eliminate the North’s nuclear ICBM threat Seoul may be willing to support it. This means that the expansion of Pyongyang’s nuclear weapons and missiles would no longer serve as a deterrent but rather elicit a forceful U.S. and South Korean response (i.e., double-edged sword). In other words, Kim Jong-un would be taking a significant risk to his survival by operationalizing a nuclear ICBM capability since the U.S. cannot accept being held hostage to North Korean nuclear threats to the homeland. As of January 29, 2014, James Clapper, the Director of National Intelligence (DNI), testified that North Korea’s intent for its nuclear weapons program is deterrence, prestige, and coercive diplomacy. However, he admitted that “we do not know Pyongyang’s nuclear doctrine or employment concepts.”<sup>86</sup> This perspective could change based on the U.S. IC’s assessment of Pyongyang’s

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<sup>83</sup> Eliot Elwar, Op-Ed: North Korea Threatens US with nuclear strike on American cities; *Digital Journal*, April 6, 2013, <http://digitaljournal.com/article/347381> (accessed June 21, 2013).

<sup>84</sup> Dave Schuler, “Buying the Same North Korean Horse and Accepting the Unacceptable,” May 31, 2009, [http://www.outsidethebeltway.com/buying\\_the\\_same\\_north\\_korean\\_horse\\_and\\_accepting\\_the\\_unacceptable/](http://www.outsidethebeltway.com/buying_the_same_north_korean_horse_and_accepting_the_unacceptable/) (accessed November 11, 2014).

<sup>85</sup> Kim Duk-Ki, “The Republic of Korea’s Counter-Asymmetric Strategy: Lessons from ROKS Cheonan and Yeonpyeong Island,” *Naval War College Review*, Vol. 65, No. 1 (Winter 2012), pp. 57-63.

<sup>86</sup> James R. Clapper, Director of National Intelligence, “Statement for the Record, Worldwide Threat Assessment of the U.S. Intelligence Community, Senate Select Committee on Intelligence,” January 29, 2014, p. 6.



operationalizing of its nuclear ICBM capability. The North Koreans may have played their weak hand very well to this point, but there is no guarantee the U.S. would concede its use of force when the North operationalizes its nuclear ICBM capabilities and threatens the U.S. homeland.

Were the U.S. IC to assess with high confidence that North Korea has miniaturized its nuclear weapons for missile delivery,<sup>87</sup> it would present the “gravest of dangers”<sup>88</sup> to the U.S. The same would be true of Pyongyang’s proliferation of nuclear weapons or related technologies to another rogue state or non-state actor.<sup>89</sup> What this implies is the primacy of intelligence. Only with convincing and releasable intelligence would these actions ultimately weaken Pyongyang’s nuclear deterrent value and justify the potential use of force against the Kim regime. Paradoxically, what this reveals is that the more North Korea attempts to develop its nuclear ICBM capability the more vulnerable it is likely to become to U.S. and South Korean hard power. North Korea seems to be aware of the risks despite its display of nuclear ICBM capability in April 2013.

What is often ignored in the analysis of Pyongyang’s nuclear weapons state declaration in April 2013 is that it also outlined the key tenets of North Korea’s nuclear strategy based on the principle of self-defense. (see Appendix D). The SPA’s decree stated the purpose of its nuclear arsenal was to deter and repel “the aggression and attack of the enemy against the DPRK and dealing a deadly retaliatory blow at the strongholds of aggression.” The law also clarified, “The nuclear weapons of the DPRK can be used only by a final order of the Supreme Commander of the Korean People’s Army to repel invasion or attack from a hostile nuclear weapons state and make retaliatory strikes.” It pledged not to “use nukes against the non-nuclear states nor threaten them with those weapons unless they join a hostile nuclear weapons

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<sup>87</sup> Reuters, “North Korea may be close to developing nuclear missile, some say,” May 20, 2014, <http://missilethreat.com/north-korea-may-be-close-to-developing-nuclear-missile-some-say/> (accessed June 8, 2014).

<sup>88</sup> Peter Howard, “Why Not Invade North Korea? Threats, Language Games, and U.S. Foreign Policy,” *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 48, No. 4 (December 2004), pp. 809-810.

<sup>89</sup> Graham Allison, “Forward,” in Gregory J. Moore, ed., *North Korean Nuclear Operationality*, p. ix.

state in its invasion and attack on the DPRK.” Moreover, it even claimed Pyongyang will “strictly observe the rules on safekeeping and management of nukes and ensuring the stability of nuclear tests.” Finally, it addressed the issue of proliferation by stating, “The DPRK shall establish a mechanism and order for their safekeeping and management so that nukes and their technology, weapon-grade nuclear substance may not leak out *illegally*.”<sup>90</sup> In spite of the international condemnation of its nuclear weapons and related programs, North Korea outlined its nuclear weapon’s strategy (e.g., first use, use against non-nuclear weapons states, launch authority, safekeeping, and proliferation) by emphasizing the defensive nature of these weapons. Next, the study examines the nuclear ICBM demonstration in 2013 by using the smart power framework.

### **7.3.3 U.S.-South Korea Exercises Cited to Justify Nuclear Weapons**

First, what was the preferred outcome of the nuclear ICBM deployment? It is most likely that Kim’s aim was to manipulate the annual U.S.-South Korea exercises FOAL EAGLE and KEY RESOLVE to hype the U.S. and the South Korean threat in order to establish his legitimacy by formally declaring North Korea as a nuclear weapons state. This probably helped him to consolidate his power by demonstrating that his regime was capable of building a “strong and prosperous nation.” The show of force missile deployment to the east coast and the threatening rhetoric was intended to demonstrate that Kim was capable of standing up to the U.S. with his own nuclear deterrent capability that could now threaten the U.S. homeland. The U.S. responded accordingly by overtly deploying B-52 and B-2 bombers as well as its missile defense forces.<sup>91</sup> Although it remains to be seen, Kim may have miscalculated because the incident may have forced the U.S. to consider the use of force to eliminate the North Korean nuclear ICBM threat. In the meantime, Washington and Seoul

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<sup>90</sup> KCNA, “Law on Consolidating Position of Nuclear Weapons State Adopted.”

<sup>91</sup> Thom Shanker and Choe Sang-hun, “U.S. Runs Practice Sorties in South Korea,” *The New York Times*, March 28, 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/29/world/asia/us-begins-stealth-bombing-runs-over-south-korea.html> (accessed November 13, 2014).

finalized their combined counter provocation plan to deter future provocations from North Korea.

Second, which forms of power behavior did North Korea assume would succeed? I argue the North's strategists (since Kim was still inexperienced) may have believed this was an opportune time to use coercive power to justify North Korea's position as a de-facto nuclear weapons state following the successful space launch in December 2012 and the February 2013 nuclear test. The latter is significant because Pyongyang claimed it had miniaturized a nuclear device during the third test, which implies it is actively pursuing a nuclear ICBM capability. However, before deploying the missiles, Pyongyang tried to address international concerns to gain sympathy by revealing that its nuclear weapons policy was based on the principle of self-defense. When the North sensed it had achieved its aim to demonstrate it possessed a nuclear ICBM capability, it chose not to launch the missile. It used high-level diplomacy with China and re-opened the KIC to de-escalate the situation.

Third, what resources were available to implement the strategy? North Korea used its growing nuclear and missile capabilities to help consolidate Kim's power. The North probably never intended to launch the missiles but revealed the missile deployment as a demonstration of power to declare it had a nuclear ICBM capability to defend the country. The escalation during the provocation was largely caused by the intense propaganda from the regime that expressed its intent to preemptively strike the U.S. homeland with nuclear ICBMs. At home, the Kim regime attempted to show its benignity by manipulating the overt nuclear and conventional threat from the U.S. during military exercises to mobilize the population, the KPA, and the intelligence and security services. The exit strategy was to employ high-level diplomacy and use the KIC as leverage to return to the status-quo.

Fourth, how did the North Koreans view the likelihood of success? North Koreans were probably convinced they could control the escalation ladder as long as they refrained from launching the missile. The U.S.'s overt deployment of B-52 and B-2 bombers might have increased the chance of success of their

strategy to bolster Kim's position as the Supreme Leader. They became a visible symbol of U.S. nuclear threat to Pyongyang as Washington attempted to reassure Seoul with its extended nuclear deterrence. If all else failed, Kim was prepared to use diplomacy with Beijing and Seoul to de-escalate.

Fifth, what were the policy preferences of key actors? Kim's strategists probably saw an opportunity to demonstrate his leadership by directly confronting the U.S. with his growing nuclear ICBM capability. On the other hand, the U.S. felt threatened and it deployed its missile defense forces to defend itself. At the same time, Washington decided to reassure Seoul by overtly deploying B-52 and B-2 bombers to Korea. It was also a message to Pyongyang that it was prepared to defend South Korea. Moreover, many in Washington were becoming aware it would only be a matter of several years before the U.S. would have to make the difficult choice about how to resolve the North Korean nuclear ICBM threat. That said, the U.S. preferred to work with Beijing to pressure Pyongyang to change its behavior and continued to use unilateral and multilateral sanctions. On the other hand, while Beijing seemed frustrated by Pyongyang's nuclear provocations, it was unwilling to use coercion to change North Korean behavior. Again, this incongruent policy approach among the key actors does not seem to be working. The question is what tools does Kim Jong-un have to consolidate his power and survive?

#### **7.4 Survival Tools: Continuity and Change**

According to Terence Roehrig, "Early pronouncements have indicated that Kim Jong un will continue the legacies of *Songun* and *Juche* established by his father and grandfather."<sup>92</sup> As evidence has shown, it is true that in the spring of 2012, the North Korean propagandists used the legacies of both of his predecessors to establish the foundation for his rule, but some evidence suggests the recent adoption of *Byungjin* may lead to a more balanced approach which could institutionalize some of the positive social changes that

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<sup>92</sup> Park Kyung-ae and Scott Snyder, eds., *North Korea in Transition: Politics, Economy, and Society* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2013), p. 63.

have been occurring in North Korea since the famines of the mid-1990s. Having said that, further examination of North Korea's survival tools below reveals how important the anti-Japanese legacy and *Juche* are to the regime's survival. This suggests Kim probably will allow pragmatic changes to occur (like his father) but will continue to rely on the regime's core ideology and revolutionary legacy to establish his legitimacy and survive. The question remains how essential China will be to Kim's survival and that will be examined further below. The role of nuclear weapons, however, has already been discussed in detail in Chapter 6 and above. The North's coercive strategy to extort aid and its illicit activities also will not be discussed since earlier review in Chapter 2 made it clear that since 2008, both are no longer effective tools of survival. The post-totalitarian nature of the regime that was also discussed in Chapter 2 will focus primarily on marketization, penetration of external information, and the continuing relevance of *Juche*. The reason is that Kim Jong-un appears to be in control of the remaining traits of totalitarianism (i.e., party, army, and secret police) despite indications he is relying more on the KWP than his father.<sup>93</sup> Moreover, as noted above, Kim Jong-un's sister appears to be overseeing the management of the regime's security services.<sup>94</sup>

In short, it is plausible to assume that the loyalty of the KPA, KWP, and the security services have been tested for four years and are assessed as loyal to Kim. According to John Grisafi, during his "reign of terror" Kim has executed about 70 high-level officials since assuming power in December 2011, to include his uncle Jang Song-thaek. During Jang's trial in December 2013, the regime had to admit, whether true or not, factionalism remained and it was deeply rooted in North Korea's core institutions. The regime claimed, "When Kim Jong Il passed away so suddenly and untimely to our sorrow, he [Jang] began working in real earnest to realize his long-cherished greed for power." When Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il were alive, Jang was forced to stay low but, when Kim Jong-un was designated successor, he saw his "wild ambition." He

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<sup>93</sup> Park and Snyder, eds., *North Korea in Transition*, pp. 47-48.

<sup>94</sup> Todd, "Younger Sister of Kim Jong Un Gains Power in North Korea."

was accused of portraying himself, both domestically and externally, as “a special being” that was equivalent to Kim Jong-un.<sup>95</sup>

Jang reportedly sought to mobilize “a group of reactionaries” to stage a coup by recruiting “undesirable and alien elements including those who had been dismissed and relieved of their posts after being severely punished for disobeying the instruction of Kim Jong Il.” Jang was accused of committing many acts in the past to “create extreme illusion and idolization of him by making him appear as a *special being* who can overrule either issues decided by the party or its line.” The regime found him guilty of working actively “to put all affairs of the country under his control, massively increasing the staff of his department and organs under it, and stretch[ing] his tentacles to ministries and national institutions.” He was accused of creating a “little kingdom” that was perceived as untouchable as his faction attempted to wrest control of the North’s economy away from the Cabinet. The regime found him guilty of selling its mineral resources at random and leasing the land within the Rason SEZ “to a foreign country for a period of five decades” to pay off his debt.<sup>96</sup>

Jang reportedly confessed his plans for a coup to a special military tribunal from the MSS:

I was going to stage the coup by using army officers who had close ties to me or by mobilizing armed forces under the control of my confidants. I don’t know well about the recently appointed army officers but have some acquaintances with those appointed in the past period. I thought the army might join the coup if the living of the people and service personnel further deteriorate in the future. And I calculated that my confidants in my department including Ri Ryong Ha and Jang Su Gil would surely follow me and had a plan to use the one in charge of the people’s security organ as my confidant. It was my calculation that I might use several others besides them.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> KCNA, “Traitor Jang Song Thaek Executed,” December 13, 2013, <http://www.kcna.co.jp/index-e.htm> (accessed December 16, 2013).

<sup>96</sup> KCNA, “Traitor Jang Song Thaek Executed.”

<sup>97</sup> KCNA, “Traitor Jang Song Thaek Executed.”

Jang apparently had not made up his mind about the timing of the coup but, once he gained more power and exercised more influence over “all economic organs on the Cabinet,” he would have seized power when the economy collapsed. This would have legitimized his rule as he lived up to his reputation as a reformer and quickly gained the support of external powers.<sup>98</sup> If he was in fact a reformer, Jang never got his chance, but this rationale highlights the importance of economic development to the Kim Jong-un regime. According to Lee Hong Yung, Kim used Jang to temporarily consolidate his power, and then purged him and his followers.<sup>99</sup>

As we have seen in Chapter 4, the purges follow long established tradition of his grandfather who also purged all of his rivals during the early phase of his power consolidation. However, once he became the Supreme Leader, Kim Il-sung relied on milder forms of punishment. On the other hand, Kim Jong-il may have avoided his own reign of terror by using the Three Revolutionary Movement to purge the old guard<sup>100</sup> and subsequently promote his own people during his long grooming period as the successor. Having said that, the following highlights how Kim Jong-un is following Kim Il-sung’s lead to control his core elites and indicates why he may have consolidated his power:<sup>101</sup>

In recent months, there have been numerous cases of North Korean elites reemerging after months of absence from public view. For several of these officials, there is evidence to suggest they were undergoing re-education and even punishment due to some infraction or shortcoming. These examples may be evidence of a shift in Kim Jong Un’s method of disciplining senior officials and exerting his supreme authority over regime elites. This trend itself may be a sign that Kim and the rest of the core leadership now feel more secure and stable as the rulers of North Korea.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> KCNA, “Traitor Jang Song Thaek Executed.”

<sup>99</sup> Lee Hong Yung, “North Korea in 2013,” pp. 99-100.

<sup>100</sup> Tudor and Pearson, *North Korea Confidential*, pp. 90-94.

<sup>101</sup> Grisafi, “Kim Jong Un may be easing reign of terror over elites.”

<sup>102</sup> Grisafi, “Kim Jong Un may be easing reign of terror over elites.”

As Kim maintains continuity over the key institution of his regime, *Juche* ideology remains vulnerable to change and will be discussed below. However, I will first examine the implications of significant social change in North Korea.

#### **7.4.1 Kim Jong-un: Neo-Totalitarianism or Post-Totalitarianism?**

Despite the ongoing marketization and the penetration of external information, it may be premature to suggest Kim Jong-un has given up on the totalitarian system. As Kim consolidates his power, he may attempt to regain more control over the changes in North Korean society. On the other hand, it is also plausible that these changes that began during the famine years of the 1990s have gained sufficient inertia that Kim Jong-un may not be able to revive the totalitarian system. In fact, one could argue the system has already transitioned to a post-totalitarian regime under his father's rule. However, the reality is that North Korea has yet to officially embrace economic reform and still attempts to control access to information. As a result, in addition to examining the provocations by the Kim regime, one must understand the changes that are ongoing within the regime and their implications.

First, there is little doubt that the growth and tolerance of local markets in North Korea is changing North Korean society, and has the potential to further erode central control over society. Some have recently recognized the potential for the expansion of these markets to empower the average North Korean to become an "agent of change."<sup>103</sup> In fact, Park So-keel has argued that this Jangmadang (market) Generation (JG) of North Koreans, who were born in the 1980s and 1990s, "presents a clear challenge to the North Korean government." They consist of approximately six million young adults, ages 18 to 35. The most influential among them live in large cities and border towns, and grew up during "an era of profound economic, information, and social change." Unlike the older generation who reminisce about the golden years under Kim Il-sung, the JG grew up during the Kim Jong-il years when there was little or no PDS and they had to fend for themselves to survive. Thus, "They are natives to capitalism,"

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<sup>103</sup> Smith, *North Korea: Markets and Military Rule*, pp. 202-208.



and were active participants in “private business, market activities and de facto capitalism.” The JG also had wide exposure to outside information and eventually got accustomed to consuming smuggled “CDs, DVDs, MP3s, USBs, mobile phones and laptops.” It meant they regularly broke North Korean rules and laws to survive and even prosper. Most important for the regime, “this disobedience is not just individual, but networked and shared to an unprecedented degree.” Although the level of social change within the JG does not apply to all at the same level, their aspirations are rising and the regime’s mishandling of this group could pose significant challenges for Kim Jong-un. Park argued, the older generation may not have the will to resist the regime, but “the energy and ideas of the Jangmadang Generation seem likely to play a key role in the transformation and rebuilding of a better North Korea.”<sup>104</sup>

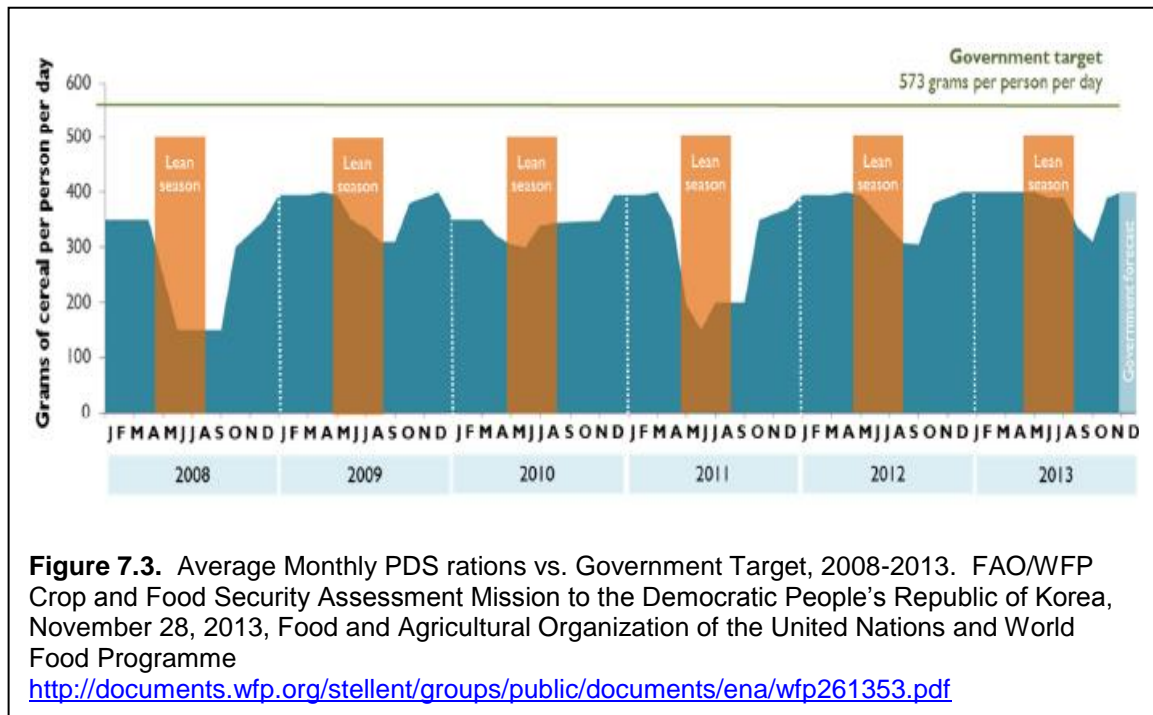
As noted below, Kim seems to be aware of the growing expectations of his people and promised to improve the lives of his people. He is actively experimenting with economic changes from above and some of them have the potential to have a positive impact on the economy. For example, Andray Abrahamian’s 2014 study on North Korea’s SEZs confirmed “the priority Pyongyang has put on economic growth has increased.” This was supported by Kim Jong-il’s on-the-spot guidance visits after his son was declared as his successor in 2010. During that year, he visited 58 economic sites versus 33 military units. After his father’s death, Kim Jong-un celebrated the centennial anniversary of his grandfather’s birth (April 15, 2012) by stating that the North Korean people ‘*will never have to tighten their belts again*’.”<sup>105</sup> Henceforth, Kim’s competence and leadership is likely to be associated with his ability to deliver positive performance in the economy will have a direct impact on the

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<sup>104</sup> Park So-keel, “The Jangmadang Generation and the Future of the North Korean System,” Liberty in North Korea, August 6, 2015, pp. 1-9.

<sup>105</sup> Andray Abrahamian, “The ABCs of North Korea’s SEZs,” U.S.-Korea Institute (2014), pp. 7-11.

stability of the regime.<sup>106</sup> The question is can the regime deliver sustainable economic growth?



While Abrahamian admitted Pyongyang was not ready for serious economic reform, it nevertheless appears to be mimicking certain aspects of Chinese economic reforms. In fact, it was experimenting with “the reorganization of collective farms, increased autonomy for State-owned Enterprises and an overhaul of investment laws.” With respect to agriculture, as part of the “New Economic Management Measure” of 2013, it piloted a program to reduce the size of the work unit to less than six people, which probably meant one to two families forming agriculture work units, and that could incentivize them to work harder and allow them keep more of what they produce. There are also some indications that this program was expanded to a larger population in the rural areas.<sup>107</sup> Lankov has even argued that North Korea has

<sup>106</sup> Ahn Mun Suk, “Kim Jong-il’s Death and His Son’s Strategy for Seizing Power in North Korea,” *Problems of Post-Communism*, Vol. 59, No. 4 (July-August 2012), p. 36.

<sup>107</sup> Abrahamian, “The ABCs of North Korea’s SEZs,” pp. 7-11.

implemented agricultural reforms by empowering farming households on June 28, 2012. This has resulted in the best harvest in over 20 years in 2013 and the results exceeded expectations despite the drought in 2014.<sup>108</sup> (see Figure 7.3).

Obviously, the success of this pilot agricultural program would be significant in the regime's efforts to alleviate its persistent food shortages, but it will take more than a return to family plots to ensure food security. A sustainable increase in food production will require additional inputs through international trade and that will require "balanced economic development, whereby productive industrial and service sectors help produce or fund the inputs needed for agriculture as well as generate income for the urban population to purchase food." Moreover, the state must have sufficient funds to purchase food from farmers at the market rate to make the system work,<sup>109</sup> and all of this will require systemic reform which the regime has resisted in the past.

The regime also announced it would grant "greater autonomy in decision-making for companies" as part of its new economic measure of 2013. A pro-North Korean newspaper in Japan highlighted, "Whereas in the past enterprises had just to carry out the production plans handed down from the state, *the new measure has allowed enterprises to make production contracts with various clients based on their own decisions* while implementing the state plan as well." What this really meant was the KWP would select the managers of the State Owned Enterprises (SOEs), but authorities in Pyongyang would no longer be responsible "for distributing food and other provisions for workers and for setting quotas, targets or restrictions on production." It was almost as if Kim had to take some risks to live up to his April 2012 promise that he would improve the lives of his people. This also led to allocation of resources to promote projects that would improve "leisure, recreational activities, and a pleasant life." While

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<sup>108</sup> Andrei Lankov, "N. Korea's quiet market reforms," September 14, 2015, <http://www.nknews.org/2015/09/north-koreas-markets-a-brief-history-of-crackdowns-and-tolerance/> (accessed September 16, 2015).

<sup>109</sup> Park Kyung-ae, ed., *Non-Traditional Security Issues in North Korea* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2013), pp. 112-113.

there are many economic experiments being tried, Abrahamian argues that the showpiece of the effort is the expansion of North Korea's SEZs.<sup>110</sup>

If Abrahamian is correct, the recent revival of the SEZs in the regime's economic plan could be significant because SEZs were not taken seriously before by outsiders. Pyongyang first established its SEZ over a decade after China declared the Shenzhen SEZ in 1980. Kim Il-sung and his large entourage visited successful SEZs in Shenzhen and Shanghai in the early 1980s, and they subsequently copied and propagated China's Joint Venture Law (JVL) in 1984 and established their first SEZ in the Rajin-Sonbong (i.e., Rason) area near the China-Russia-North Korea tri-border region in 1991. It was evident at the time that North Korea was moving slowly and the SEZ project was mostly ignored since its economy was collapsing in the 1990s and there was little interest from outside investors. Nonetheless, Pyongyang revised the foreign investment laws periodically throughout the 1990s.<sup>111</sup> The advent of the Sunshine Policy resulted in two SEZs promoting joint ventures with Seoul at Kaesong (manufacturing) and Kungang (tourism). The Kungang zone closed after a South Korean tourist was killed by a KPA soldier in the DMZ in 2008. The only profitable SEZ that Kim inherited was the KIC, but the 2013 law would significantly expand the SEZs.<sup>112</sup>

In October 2013, the North declared it was planning to establish 13 more SEZs at the provincial level. They were separated into five different sectors, which included "Export Processing/Trade Zones; Industrial Development Zones; Agricultural Development Zones; Tourism Development Zones; and Economic Development Zones." While the promotion of SEZs has been impressive, it will be a challenge for North Korea to attract significant foreign investment due to U.S. and international financial sanctions. Another problem is that most North Korean officials have little understanding of what expectations potential foreign investors would have for doing business in North Korea, such as right to hire

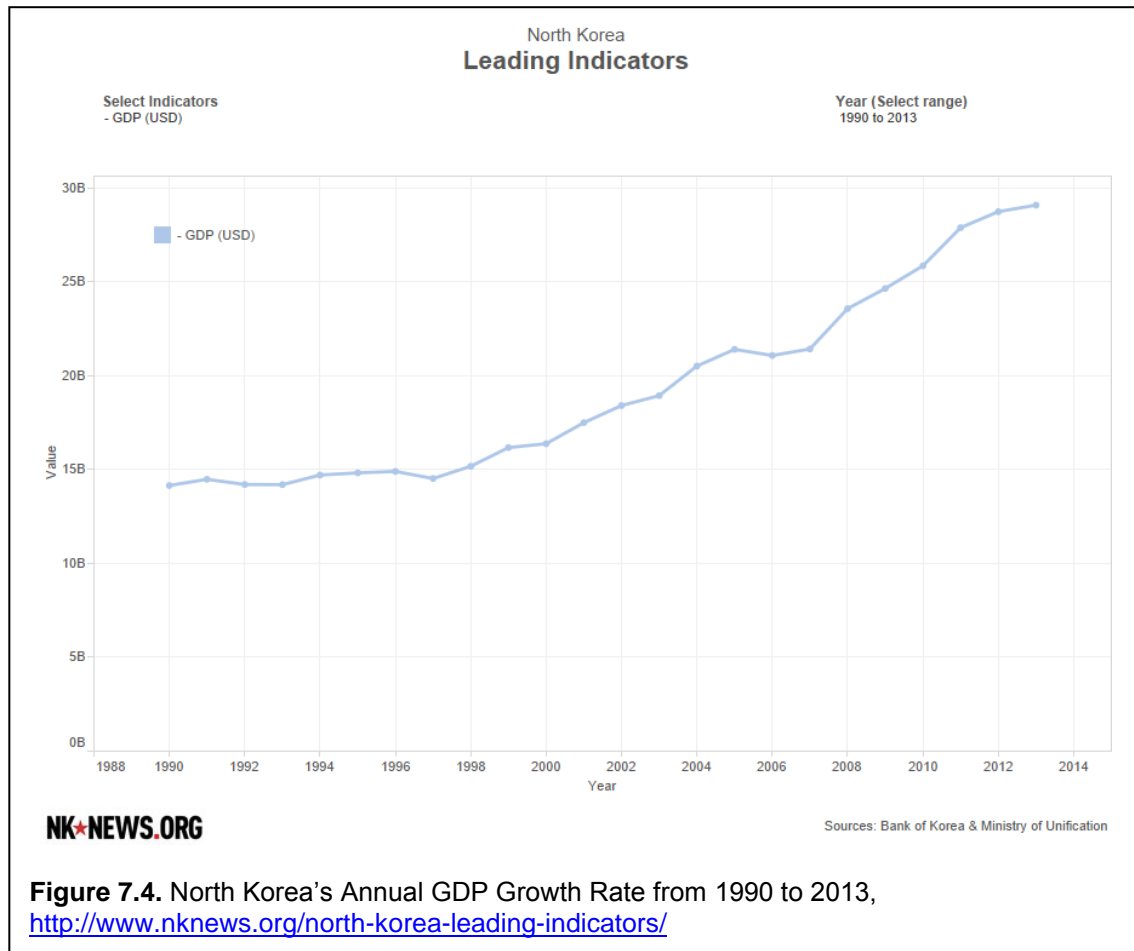
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<sup>110</sup> Abrahamian, "The ABCs of North Korea's SEZs," pp. 7-13.

<sup>111</sup> Abrahamian, "The ABCs of North Korea's SEZs," pp. 7-10.

<sup>112</sup> Abrahamian, "The ABCs of North Korea's SEZs," pp. 8-13.

and fire employees, access to information, remittance of earnings, etc. With so much uncertainty, many investors would look for better opportunities elsewhere. For the SEZs to achieve their potential, the North needs more officials who have “greater exposure to the outside world, more education and more hands-on experiences with investors.” However, the current sanctions regime makes it difficult to cultivate experienced economic cadres in North Korea.<sup>113</sup>



Nonetheless, Abrahamian argued that four SEZs in “Wonsan [Special Tourist Zone], Rason [Export Processing/Trade Zone], Unjong [Technology Zone] and Sinuiju [International Trade Zone]... have the best prospects for growth in the short to medium-term.” To achieve success, the North Koreans

<sup>113</sup> Abrahamian, “The ABCs of North Korea’s SEZs,” pp. 14-33.

would have to overcome many challenges associated with SEZs, improve their foreign relations with the key players in the region, and consider broader economic reforms throughout the country.<sup>114</sup> Thus, the future prospect for the North Korean economy looks pessimistic but it has managed to make some progress in recent years. According to NK News.org, annual GDP growth for North Korea has increased gradually under Kim Jong-un. (see Figure 7.4). Lankov views the growth as quiet and cautious implementation of agricultural and industrial reforms through empowerment of farming households and industrial managers. The results have been much improved harvests over the last couple of years and manufactured goods being sold legally in the markets.<sup>115</sup> Moreover, since early 2010, North Korea has allowed private entrepreneurs to flourish and some reports indicate “local authorities have been advised to cooperate with the new rich, using their capital to launch some major projects.”<sup>116</sup> What has all this meant for the average North Korean?

Nearly all North Koreans, including those in the countryside, now own televisions. Moreover, more than half of the North Korean households possess video-playing devices to watch foreign movies. Movies from the West and South Korea are illegal but other foreign movies from China, India and Russia are apparently legal.<sup>117</sup> In 2008, owning a refrigerator was a luxury far beyond most North Koreans’ reach and today almost forty percent of the people in Pyongyang own them. Even the well-to-do in the periphery have them and to gain access to a reliable power grid they bribe the right local officials. This means those with refrigerators can buy meat, which was also reserved for the core elites only several years ago. That is not all. Almost 30 percent of Pyongyang households own washing machines and up to 9 percent of rural

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<sup>114</sup> Abrahamian, “The ABCs of North Korea’s SEZs,” pp. 14-33.

<sup>115</sup> Lankov, “N. Korea’s quiet market reforms.” Since markets are still illegal, what is meant by goods being sold legally is that the regime approves or overlooks goods being sold in markets.

<sup>116</sup> Andrei Lankov, “North Korea’s markets: A brief history of crackdowns and tolerance,” September 7, 2015, <http://www.nknews.org/2015/09/north-koreas-markets-a-brief-history-of-crackdowns-and-tolerance/> (accessed September 16, 2015).

<sup>117</sup> Andrei Lankov, “The bustling North Korean consumer good market,” August 20, 2015, <http://www.nknews.org/2015/08/the-bustling-north-korean-consumer-goods-market/> (accessed September 16, 2015).

homes own them as well. Other evidence suggesting life in North Korea is gradually improving is the sprouting of new and popular restaurants in larger cities across the country. North Koreans are also more fashion conscious and mimic foreign fashion trends.<sup>118</sup>

Anna Fifield has forecasted that the North's economy is projected to grow by 7% in 2015 largely due to expansion of lower-level economic activity in northeast China.<sup>119</sup> Her growth rate appears to be a bit too optimistic, but how the economy evolves as the regime's economic policies are implemented from above and market forces expands from below, will largely shape the nature of the post-totalitarian regime. Anecdotal evidence from a recent North Korean refugee survey suggest that the "first few years of Kim Jong Un's rule have been marked by an exponential growth in the unofficial economy. The authorities have stopped interfering with many illegal and semi-legal private businesses that now flourish in North Korea."<sup>120</sup> Although this promotes economic growth, it changes the way North Koreans view social status. The traditional view of *Songbun* also matters less as "home ownership and wealth are increasingly being emphasized" by North Koreans. For instance, there is a embryonic growth of "capitalists, petit bourgeoisie, and wage laborers." Hence, this focus on economic progress could weaken the "ideological foundation" of the regime.<sup>121</sup> More importantly, a recent study of North Korean markets indicates they "survived or even thrived during periods of [government] repression" from 2009-2010. While there are many variables for why some regions have larger markets than others (e.g., access to ports), one likely factor is the "attitudes among local government officials." In places like Sinuiju near

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<sup>118</sup> Andrei Lankov, "The bustling North Korean consumer good market," August 20, 2015, <http://www.nknews.org/2015/08/the-bustling-north-korean-consumer-goods-market/> (accessed September 16, 2015).

<sup>119</sup> Anna Fifield, "North Korea's growing economy — and America's misconceptions about it," *Washington Post*, March 13, 2015, [http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia\\_pacific/north-koreas-growing-economy-and-americas-misconceptions-about-it/2015/03/13/b551d2d0-c1a8-11e4-a188-8e4971d37a8d\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/north-koreas-growing-economy-and-americas-misconceptions-about-it/2015/03/13/b551d2d0-c1a8-11e4-a188-8e4971d37a8d_story.html) (accessed 28 March 2015).

<sup>120</sup> Lankov, "Kim Jong Un's popularity, explained."

<sup>121</sup> Han Jong-woo and Jung Tae-hern, eds., *Understanding North Korea: Indigenous Perspectives* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2014), p. 135.

the Chinese border, local officials “may have greater autonomy and flexibility in policymaking” due to its proximity to China.<sup>122</sup> In other words, there are indications that growing marketization could even influence change in the relationship between central and local governments in some locations.

Second, as markets spread, North Koreans are increasingly being exposed to information that challenges the monopoly control of communication and alters their views about their own society. As a result, it is widely recognized that North Korea has lost its near monopoly control of information and the people are now more aware of developments in the outside world.<sup>123</sup> According to Scott Bruce, this has led many to believe it is almost inevitable that the growing penetration of information will “induce a radical change in the North Korean state,” and he cautions against simply assuming that growing use of information technology and access to outside information will have a liberalizing effect on North Korean society.<sup>124</sup> On the other hand, Park So-keel has argued that while the JG cannot openly protest against the regime, they can show low-level expressions of disobedience “through fashions, language and behaviours.” For instance, these are manifested through mimicking of South Korean dramas and dialect.<sup>125</sup> Nevertheless, it is likely to take some time before the JG becomes a revolutionary generation that can transform the North. Moreover, the regime will also attempt to stifle any movement by the JG to challenge the regime.

Although it is tempting to assume “increased access to information will undermine authoritarian governments and bolster democratic social movements,” it is also possible to use information technologies “to support authoritarian regimes through information control, surveillance, and propaganda.” In other words, regimes like North Korea will not sit idly by as

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<sup>122</sup> Benjamin Katzeff Silberstein, “Growth and Geography of Markets in North Korea: New Evidence from Satellite Imagery,” *US-Korea Institute at SAIS*, October 2015, pp. 7-21.

<sup>123</sup> Kretchun and Kim, “A Quiet Opening: North Koreans in a Changing Media Environment,” p. 1.

<sup>124</sup> Scott Thomas Bruce, “Information Technology and Social Controls in North Korea,” *Korea Economic Institute of America*, January 28, 2014, [http://www.keia.org/sites/default/files/publications/2014\\_aps\\_scottbruce.pdf](http://www.keia.org/sites/default/files/publications/2014_aps_scottbruce.pdf) (accessed March 10, 2015).

<sup>125</sup> Park, “The Jangmadang Generation and the Future of the North Korean System,” pp. 5-7.



growing penetration of information and use of information technology threaten the survival of the regime. North Korea has not given up on its efforts to maintain strict control over its populace. On the contrary, the regime has determined that use of information technology is a necessary evil if it tends to increase efficiency and promote foreign investments. In order to minimize the risk of ideological contagions “associated with the use of cell phones, intranet, and internet,” Pyongyang has adopted a “mosquito net” strategy to “reap the positive benefits of the technology.”<sup>126</sup>

The strategy to control information and information technology includes co-opting regime elites by providing access to cell phones and other information technology as a material incentive, and imposing severe “penalties for possession of forbidden technology or the misuse of approved technology.” Those living in the periphery, particularly non-elites, generally do not have access to cell phones or other information technology due to prohibitive costs of owning them and lack of access to reliable sources of energy to operate them. On the other hand, getting access to these communications tools allows North Koreans to “communicate in ways that are unprecedented in the history of the state,” even for the elites.<sup>127</sup> More importantly, in addition to the elites, North Koreans living in border areas “boast an increasingly well informed and nuanced understanding of the outside world based on multiple sources.” North Koreans are also willing to share this knowledge “with those they trust” mostly through word of mouth. They do so because the security services’ enforcement of the rules for violating misuse of information technology and sensitive information is sporadic, punishment can be avoided with bribes, and “far fewer North Koreans appear to be reporting on each other than before.”<sup>128</sup> In short, similar to the North Korean economy, there is a struggle between the top-down efforts by the regime to control information and the growing ability by the North

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<sup>126</sup> Bruce, “Information Technology and Social Controls in North Korea,” p. 2.

<sup>127</sup> Bruce, “Information Technology and Social Controls in North Korea,” p. 2.

<sup>128</sup> Kretchun and Kim, “A Quiet Opening: North Koreans in a Changing Media Environment,” p. 1.

Korean populace to gain access to outside information and this will also have a significant impact on the pace of evolution of North Korean society.

Third, due to these dramatic changes in North Korean society, even North Korea's venerable *Juche* ideology is feeling the pressure to evolve. According to Armstrong, despite North Korea's exaltation of its ideology of self-reliance, it has come to a critical juncture where the regime must decide whether it will accept "substantial economic reform" or face collapse. Thus far, it has relied on propaganda to promote its anachronistic ideology and uses coercion to keep unbelievers in line. However, if Kim Jong-un is going to deliver on his promise of building a strong and prosperous nation, he has to implement significant measures that will improve the quality of life in North Korea. If he cannot show improvement in the economy, "it will take a great deal of ideological work indeed to maintain a docile and satisfied citizenry."<sup>129</sup> The JG is already susceptible to outside influence<sup>130</sup> and that could be exploited by the international community with programs that could promote greater opening to the outside world. They include covert hacking operations to "support internal dissidents," providing additional funds to NGOs educating North Koreans in the effective use of business practices, and supporting North Korean defectors by training them in "journalism, IT, and social media."<sup>131</sup>

In sum, evidence confirms the post-totalitarian transition that is ongoing in North Korea. They include top-down as well as bottom-up changes to the North Korean economy and growing penetration of information from the outside. More observers are now realizing that these social changes have created a dynamic younger generation that could challenge authority, changed the relationship between the central and some local governments, and altered the way societal hierarchy is perceived by the people. Overtime, these developments could further weaken North Korea's *Juche* ideology. More

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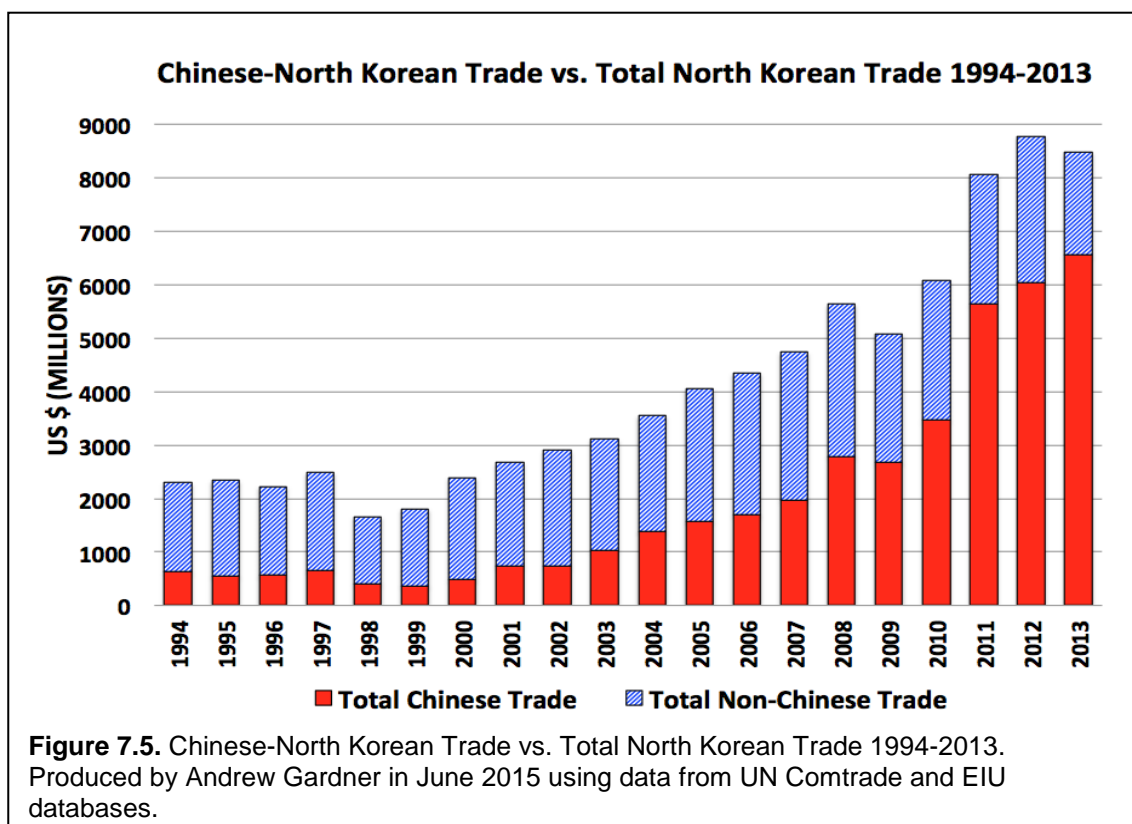
<sup>129</sup> Park and Snyder, eds., *North Korea in Transition*, p. 15.

<sup>130</sup> Park, "The Jangmadang Generation and the Future of the North Korean System," p. 7.

<sup>131</sup> Baek Jieun, "Hack and Frack North Korea: How Information Campaigns Can Liberate the Hermit Kingdom," Harvard Kennedy School, Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, April 2015, <http://belfercenter.ksg.harvard.edu/files/Hack%20and%20Frack%20NK%20final.pdf> (Accessed June 14, 2015).

importantly, if Kim Jong-un fails to deliver a better life for the majority of the North Korean people, he will either have to find a scapegoat or use more coercive power to keep the people in line. Only time will tell, but thus far, it appears that Kim has successfully managed the pace of social change and continues to consolidate his power. Next, what does North Korea's source of revenue suggest about the resiliency of the regime and what is the implication for the role of China in North Korea's survival?

#### 7.4.2 Can North Korea Survive without Chinese Support?



Chinese assistance and trade play a key role in the North Korean economy,<sup>132</sup> and they have become more significant since 2010 as the relationship between the two Koreas worsened and foreign aid dropped drastically. However, what is also important to note is that non-China trade has remained fairly consistent from 1994 to 2013, while trade with China was

<sup>132</sup> Oberdorfer and Carlin, *The Two Koreas*, pp. 448-463.

relatively low from 1994 to 2003 (see Figure 7.6). This means that during the famine years Chinese trade was not a major factor in North Korea's survival. However, North Korea was able to attract over \$2 billion worth of foreign aid from the mid-1990s to the early 2000s. This included aid from the U.S., China, South Korea, and Japan, which provided over 80 percent of the food aid from 1995 to 2007.<sup>133</sup> This is not surprising because the 1994 Agreed Framework between the U.S. and North Korea opened the door for international aid.

What is important to understand is that China-North Korea relations worsened after Beijing normalized diplomatic relations with Seoul in 1992, and there was a corresponding drop in bilateral trade until 2003. In fact, during most of the Cold War era the Soviets were the primary patron of the North Koreans. Even as North Korea became increasingly dependent on China, Scott Snyder argued, "North Korea's leadership owes its survival to its *ability* [emphasis mine] to turn its own economic dependency into an obligation and a liability for the donor rather than allowing the subsidies on which Pyongyang depended to become a source of leverage for its erstwhile patrons."<sup>134</sup> This is reminiscent of how many observers admired Kim Il-sung's ability to manipulate the Sino-Soviet split to his advantage during the Cold War and "in the process maintaining a steady stream of aid alternately from China and the Soviet Union." This allowed Kim to persuade and manipulate Moscow and Beijing to gain "security concessions, while simultaneously maneuvering to defend North Korea from "great power chauvinism".<sup>135</sup> The point is North Korea has consistently been able to develop a strategy to survive despite its weakness, and one should not assume North Korea will collapse if and when China withholds its patronage. Nevertheless, Pyongyang seems to be aware of its over-reliance on China. The question is, what are the North Koreans doing about it?

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<sup>133</sup> Victor Cha, *The Impossible State: North Korea, Past and Future* (New York: HarperCollins, 2012), p. 126.

<sup>134</sup> Scott Snyder, *China's Rise and the Two Koreas: Politics, Economics, Security* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2009), pp. 36-111.

<sup>135</sup> Snyder, *China's Rise and the Two Koreas*, p. 27.

First, the recent growth in China-North Korea trade is not primarily driven by political motivations but largely influenced by commercial Chinese interests from “local governments and enterprises in bordering provinces.” This suggests that, if and when North Korea is able to attract foreign investments for its economic projects and adopts more business-friendly practices for its “joint ventures and trade,” both could have a “significant impact on the process of economic integration in this region.” The expansion of this bilateral trade with China also contributes to the expansion of marketization in North Korea. Pyongyang has also developed a 10-year economic plan in 2011 “to shift from an aid-dependent relationship with China to an economic partnership.” The SEZs that were created near the Chinese border were intended to create this economic partnership and the rules governing them are more liberal than the one for the North’s venture with the South at Kaesong. Surprisingly, North Korea has allowed its economic officials to attend some economics courses run by the Choson Exchange (Singapore-based NGO), and even sent some of them to the U.S. for an informal economic studies tour in March 2011.<sup>136</sup>

Second, although North Korea continues to barter for food with China, it is obtaining rice from Myanmar by trading its military hardware. Pyongyang has also acquired rice and other foodstuffs from Cambodia in exchange for providing its expertise in mining and hydropower.<sup>137</sup> With respect to energy, Pyongyang has purchased two new oil tankers, and since 2011 six of them have delivered oil products to its terminals on both coasts. Furthermore, a Russian tanker has also delivered oil from the Sovetskaya Gavan port in the RFE to Nampo on the west coast of North Korea, and in June 2015 four North Korean tankers visited Sovetskaya.<sup>138</sup> According to some reports, these oil

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<sup>136</sup> Park and Snyder, eds., *North Korea in Transition*, pp. 156-159.

<sup>137</sup> Park and Snyder, eds., *North Korea in Transition*, p. 159.

<sup>138</sup> Leo Byrne, “North Korea expands its oil tanker fleet: Vessel tracker also shows visit from Russian tanker, indicating increasing shipments,” NK News org, June 24, 2015 <http://www.nknews.org/2015/06/north-korea-expands-its-oil-tanker-fleet/> (accessed July 24, 2015).

shipments led to sharp declines in the price of fuel in North Korea.<sup>139</sup> It seems plausible that expanding Russian oil imports could help ease Pyongyang's dependence on Chinese oil,<sup>140</sup> especially during a crisis.

Third, another indication that Pyongyang intends to gradually wean itself from its dependency on China is the rising imports of other Russian products, "such as cooking oil, flour, powdered milk, sugar and dried fruit." According to Moon Sung-hui, Russian products are cheaper and of higher quality than Chinese goods and thus are more desirable. Since late 2014, Russian goods have flooded North Korean markets despite the regime's rhetoric encouraging its people to buy North Korean products. North Koreans seem to know this is "part of a ploy by the regime to reduce its reliance on China." The goal is to "remove Chinese products and bring Russian-made goods into the country," and to expand North Korea's economic relationship with Russia.<sup>141</sup> Although Chinese support remains important for North Korea, Pyongyang seems to realize it cannot be too dependent on the Chinese and is taking some measures to be more independent.

Fourth, North Korea is also seeking more sustainable sources of income. According to Sheena Chestnut Greitens, the regime has developed alternative sources of income, especially legal sources of it. For example, North Korea has increased the use of contract labor overseas to earn hard currency (\$150-\$230 million/year), and what it earns at the KIC by providing cheap labor is well known (\$80-\$100 million/year). It has made a determined effort to increase earnings from tourism (less than \$100 million/year) and the growing North Korean diaspora is sending remittances, to include those from Japan (\$20-\$100

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<sup>139</sup> Moon Sung-hui, "Russian Goods Replacing Chinese Products in North Korea's Local Markets," Radio Free Asia, July 22, 2015, <http://www.rfa.org/english/news/korea/goods-07222015143537.html> (accessed July 24, 2015).

<sup>140</sup> Leo Byrne, "North Korea expands its oil tanker fleet: Vessel tracker also shows visit from Russian tanker, indicating increasing shipments," NK New.Org, June 24, 2015, <http://www.nknews.org/2015/06/north-korea-expands-its-oil-tanker-fleet/> (accessed July 24, 2015).

<sup>141</sup> Moon Sung-hui, "Russian Goods Replacing Chinese Products in North Korea's Local Markets," Radio Free Asia, July 22, 2015, <http://www.rfa.org/english/news/korea/goods-07222015143537.html> (accessed July 24, 2015).

million/year) and South Korea (over \$11 million/year). The regime has also extracted new revenues from the domestic economy by actively participating in the cell phone industry (\$400-\$600 million as of 2013) with a 25% share of the Egyptian-based company's business and charging excessive registration fees, and is seeking other ways to extract more revenue from the people's growing reliance on markets.<sup>142</sup> Long-term, North Korea also has at least \$2 trillion worth of valuable minerals to attract foreign investments.<sup>143</sup> According to Elena Ponomareva and Georgij Rudov, Moscow's interests on the Korean Peninsula includes North Korea's "treasure trove of natural resources," which includes rare earth metals "caesium, wolfram, cerium erbium and some others."<sup>144</sup>

The significance of the growing sources of legal revenue is that they are largely immune to international sanctions and this is likely to lessen their impact, which is currently the preferred policy option for the U.S. Moreover, defectors indicate that Kim Jong-il directed his people to "study international sanctions, anticipate what might be directed at North Korea in the future, and *figure out ways to bypass the measures that were implemented*."<sup>145</sup> The element of "shock and awe" of sanctions are gone, and after the BDA issue it should come as no surprise that John Park has recently argued that increased sanctions have unwittingly strengthened North Korea's ability to conduct proliferation activities. The unintended consequence of rising sanctions is that they have forced North Korea's state trading companies to adapt, and they have formed new "procurement channels with unique Chinese middlemen [who are] operating in the globalizing Chinese national economy." They are developing innovative ways to navigate around the maze of sanctions, and the higher cost of doing business in the current sanctions environment attracts skilled Chinese

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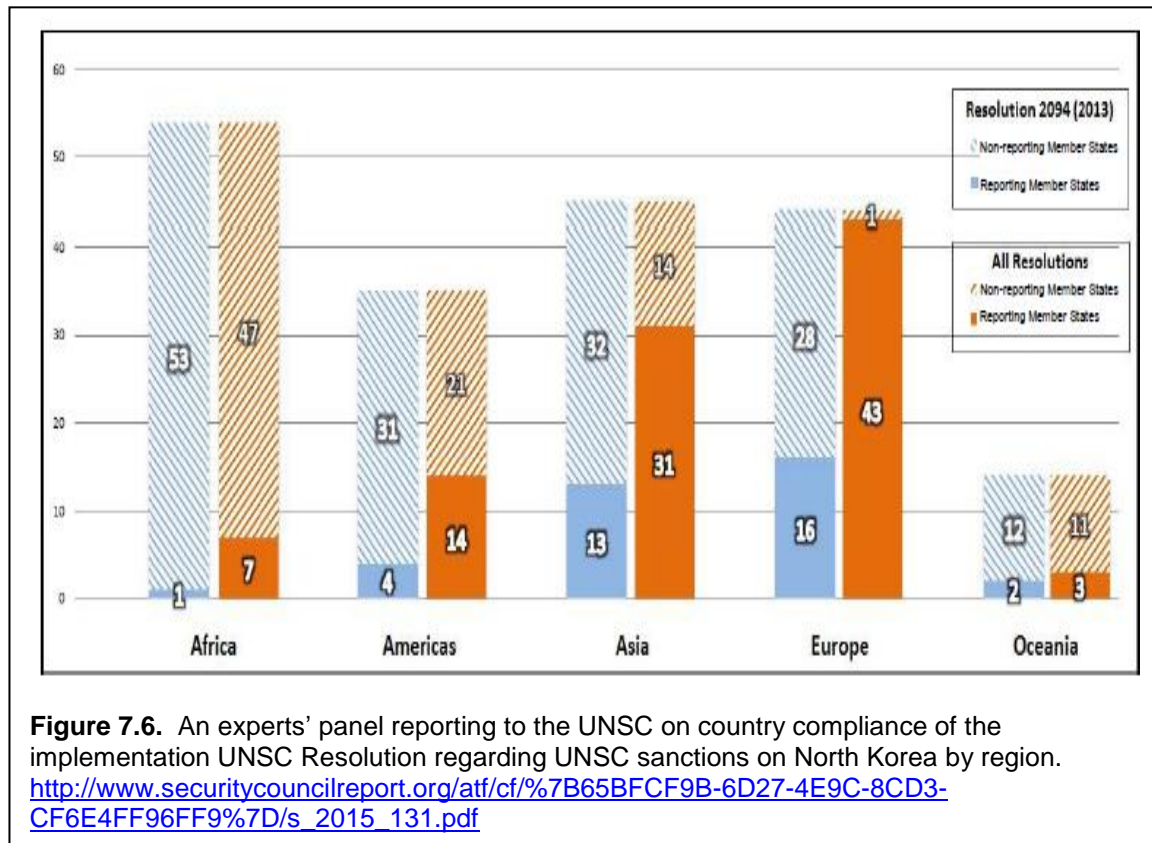
<sup>142</sup> Greitens, "Illicit: North Korea's Evolving Operations to Earn Hard Currency."

<sup>143</sup> Edward Yoon, "Status and Future of the North Korean Mineral Sector," *The Korean Journal of Defense Analysis*, Vol. 23, No. 2, June 2001, p. 193.

<sup>144</sup> Elena Ponomareva and Georgij Rudov, "Russia-North Korea: state of affairs and trends," *Journal of Asian Public Policy*, Vol. 9, No. 1, April 2016, p. 50.

<sup>145</sup> Greitens, "Illicit: North Korea's Evolving Operations to Earn Hard Currency."

businessmen who are strengthening Pyongyang's procurement system.<sup>146</sup> The regime has devised creative ways to conceal its financial activities through the use of cash couriers and financial institutions in China and the Middle East.<sup>147</sup>



According to a panel of experts reporting to the UNSC on North Korean compliance of UN sanctions, Pyongyang also uses “shell companies, foreign intermediaries and indirect payment methods,” to conduct prohibited activities. Moreover, since the first nuclear test related sanctions were levied by the UN in 2006 (UNSCR 1718), experts found many countries were “non-reporting or late-reporting” their implementation reports. (see Figure 7.5). This allows the regime to conduct UN sanctioned activities in places like the Republic of Congo (refurbishing old Soviet military equipment), Eritrea (possible arms shipment),

<sup>146</sup> John S. Park, “The Key to the North Korean Targeted Sanctions Puzzle,” *The Washington Quarterly*, Fall 2014, pp. 209-212.

<sup>147</sup> Greitens, “Illicit: North Korea’s Evolving Operations to Earn Hard Currency.”



and Uganda (police training) to earn hard currency without international scrutiny.<sup>148</sup> In short, Pyongyang remains dependent on Chinese aid but is expanding licit means to earn hard currency and working hard to reduce its economic dependency on Beijing for essential items. Perhaps more importantly, North Korea is finding innovative ways to evade UN sanctions to acquire sensitive items necessary to expand its nuclear and missile programs and discovering niche markets to promote its goods and services. Then why did Kim provoke South Korea in August 2015?

## **7.5 Resumption of Provocations and Consolidation of Kim's Power**

North Korea surprised the South again by severely wounding two South Korean soldiers on August 4, 2015. The wounded soldiers triggered North Korean landmines in the DMZ. After its investigation of the incident, the South Korean military accused the North of deliberately planting the mines near a South Korean army guard post, and vowed to launch "severe retaliation."<sup>149</sup> The last time a landmine exploded to kill or wound a soldier in the DMZ was in 1967,<sup>150</sup> as Kim Il-sung attempted to intensify provocations against UNC troops from mid- to late 1960s. It begs the question why North Korea used the landmines to raise tensions on the Korean peninsula. The evidence reveals it intended to promote the North's revolutionary credentials by discrediting Japanese Colonialism, Park Chung-hee's colonial legacy, his daughter's administration in Seoul, and to argue for a self-reliant path toward reunification.

### **7.5.1 Pyongyang Draws Spotlight to Tout Its Anti-Japanese Legacy**

Kim Jong-un most likely manufactured the landmine incident in August 2015 to legitimize his role as the Supreme Leader. He attempted to do so by spotlighting both Koreas' colonial legacy with Japan. The day the landmine incident occurred, KCNA mentioned a South Korean newspaper's claim of a

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<sup>148</sup> UN Security Council, Report of the Panel of Experts established pursuant to resolution 1874 (2009), February 23, 2015, [http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s\\_2015\\_131.pdf](http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_2015_131.pdf) (accessed November 30, 2015).

<sup>149</sup> Choe, "South Korea Accuses the North After Land Mines Maim Two Soldiers in DMZ."

<sup>150</sup> Choe, "South Korea Accuses the North After Land Mines Maim Two Soldiers in DMZ."

“sordid nexus between traitor Park Chung-hee, father of the present puppet chief executive of south Korea, and the Mitsubishi Group of Japan.” It went on to claim that after his military coup, he received a million U.S. dollars from Mitsubishi as a “political fund” during the presidential election of 1963. The North Koreans accused Park of giving Mitsubishi near monopoly control of South Korea’s economy, which made Seoul a “dependent sub-contract industry and a processing base” for the Japanese firm. Park was a “pro-Japanese lackey” that joined hands with a Japanese firm that actively supported Japan during WW II and inflicted “untold pain and damage upon Koreans.”<sup>151</sup> The North also accused Park of taking huge sums of money from Japanese firms during the 1971 presidential election, and accused his daughter of being a “wicked traitor as her father.” Pyongyang took issue with Park Geun-hye considering normalization of relations with Japan while Tokyo refuses to issue “an apology and reparation for its past crimes.”<sup>152</sup>



**Figure 7.7.** Park Chung-hee as a Japanese Army Lieutenant.  
<http://www.sakai.zaq.ne.jp/duehv307/img721.jpg>

<sup>151</sup> KCNA, “Park Chung-hee and His Daughter Accused of Sycophancy toward Japan,” August, 4, 2015, <http://kcnawatch.nknews.org/article/fbsu> (accessed September 27, 2015).

<sup>152</sup> KCNA, “Park Chung-hee and His Daughter Accused of Sycophancy toward Japan.”

This was unacceptable to all Koreans from the North's perspective since Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe was "so arrogant as to bluster that the issue of comfort women can be settled by paying about three hundred million yen... Mitsubishi [also] refused to make reparation for the loss suffered by Koreans who had been forced to do slave labor during the Japanese imperialists' colonial rule over Korea."<sup>153</sup> What seemed to be most offensive to Pyongyang was the fact that Park was sharing intelligence about North Korea with Japan "at the instigation of the U.S." It stated Park's "sycophancy toward Japan is, indeed, the most humiliating act of sycophancy and hideous act of treachery putting into the shade not only traitor Park Chung-hee but also the five traitors of 1905 [who signed away Korea's sovereignty to Japan]." Pyongyang called for investigation of both of their crimes and stated they "should be sternly punished by the nation for kissing Japan, the sworn enemy."<sup>154</sup> In short, North Korea was reminding all Koreans it was more legitimate than the Park regime as the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Korea's liberation from Japanese colonial rule was looming on August 15.

Against this background, the landmine incident brought the spotlight back on North Korea. On August 6, Pyongyang announced that it would turn back the clock 30 minutes to reclaim its sovereignty from yet another vestige of Japanese imperialism. Many observers simply discounted the time zone change as more "bizarre"<sup>155</sup> behavior by the rogue regime in Pyongyang. However, the regime justified the time change by declaring, "The wicked Japanese imperialists committed such unpardonable crimes as depriving Korea of even its standard time while mercilessly trampling down its land with 5000

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<sup>153</sup> KCNA, "Park Chung-hee and His Daughter Accused of Sycophancy toward Japan." 300 million yen is about \$2,564,100 at \$117 yen to the dollar exchange rate.

<sup>154</sup> KCNA, "Park Chung-hee and His Daughter Accused of Sycophancy toward Japan."

<sup>155</sup> Kathy Novak, "North Korea sets clocks back 30 minutes creating its own time zone," *CNN*, August 13, 2015, <http://www.cnn.com/2015/08/07/asia/north-korea-time-zone/> (accessed August 28, 2015).

year-long history and culture and pursuing the unheard-of policy of obliterating the Korean nation.”<sup>156</sup> The North Koreans did not spare the Americans.

On August 8, the North Koreans repeated their claim that the U.S. had deployed its “ultra-modern nuclear attack means” during exercise ULCHI FREEDOM GUARDIAN (UFG) to prepare for “a preemptive attack and all-out war against the DPRK.” They also accused the U.S. of misleading the public that the Six Party Talks (6PT) were on hold because of North Korean intransigence. The North argued the failure of the talks was a result of U.S. hostile policy toward North Korea, including provocative military exercises that are “escalating tension on the peninsula in the absence of dialogue.” It called on the U.S. to accept responsibility for the growing instability in Korea and the region “through its ceaseless joint military drills.” Pyongyang warned the KPA will respond to UFG with “tough military counteraction” to “firmly defend the dignity of the nation and sovereignty of the country.”<sup>157</sup> On the same day, a North Korean scholar criticized Park Geun-ryong, Park Geun-hye’s younger sister, for making pro-Japanese remarks that enraged the “entire Korean nation.” Professor Kang Chol of Kim Il-sung University denounced her for embellishing the “issue of comfort women” and shielding the visit to the Yasukuni Shrine by Japanese politicians, which even the U.S. deems as “wrong behavior.” Kang accused her of being “a special class lackey of modern-type Japanese militarism.”<sup>158</sup>

According to the *Korea Times*, a South Korean daily, Park Geun-ryong stated, “Being stricken with a victim mentality will not be good for the country’s sake.” She argued “Japan laid the groundwork for our country’s economic development,” and there was no reason for South Koreans to demand an apology every time there is a new prime minister in Tokyo since the Emperor has “bowed his head and offered an apology repeatedly.” With respect to the

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<sup>156</sup> KCNA, “Pyongyang Time Newly Fixed in DPRK,” August 6, 2015, <http://kcnawatch.nknews.org/article/fbvy> (accessed September 27, 2015).

<sup>157</sup> KCNA, “KCNA Commentary Slams U.S. and S. Korea’s Projected Ulchi Freedom Guardian,” August 8, 2015, <http://kcnawatch.nknews.org/article/fb0h> (accessed September 27, 2015).

<sup>158</sup> KCNA, “DPRK Scholar on Parks’ Sycophancy toward Japan,” August 8, 2015, <http://kcnawatch.nknews.org/article/fb0e> (accessed September 27, 2015).

Japanese politicians visit to the Yasukuni Shrine, Park stated, “Just because one's ancestors did something wrong some 100 years ago, it does not mean their descendants just ignore and not honor them.” These remarks came at a time when Seoul had informed Japan that without an apology from Tokyo over its crimes during the colonial period, there would be no summit between her older sister and Abe. Several South Korean politicians censured her by claiming, “Her remarks show she is totally ignorant in understanding the Korean people's historical wounds.”<sup>159</sup> As Pyongyang was waging a war of legitimacy between the two Koreas in anticipation of the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of their liberation from Japan, tensions continued to rise.



**Figure 7.8.** Soviet Martyrs Cemetery in Sadong district, Pyongyang, Source, KCNA.

On the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Korea's liberation from Japanese rule (August 15, 2015), the NDC argued it was sensitive to exercise UFG because its purpose was to launch a “surprise preemptive attack on the DPRK,” to

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<sup>159</sup> Yi Whan-woo, “Park's sister draws fire for pro-Japan remarks,” *Korea Times*, July 31, 2015, <http://www.latimes.com/world/asia/la-fg-korea-land-mines-broadcast-20150810-story.html> (accessed September 29, 2015).

“eliminate the headquarters” and to “occupy Pyongyang.” It called on Washington to “make a bold political decision of rolling back its anachronistic DPRK policy.” The more the U.S. attempted to sanction and pressure North Korea, the “more strongly it will retaliate against the U.S. with tremendous muscle.”<sup>160</sup> That said, Kim Jong-un began the day of celebration by visiting the Kumsusan Palace to pay homage to both Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il with the “leading officials of the KPA.”<sup>161</sup> Subsequently, Kim visited the Revolutionary Martyrs Cemetery on Mt. Taesong (i.e., cemetery for Kim Il-sung’s guerrillas)<sup>162</sup> and presented a wreath to the Patriotic Martyrs Cemetery (i.e., cemetery for Korean War veterans).<sup>163</sup> A large delegation from the Russian Federation Council, its Ministry of Defense, and the local Russian Embassy also visited the Korean Revolutionary Martyrs Cemetery,<sup>164</sup> the Liberation Tower, and the Soviet Martyrs Cemetery in Pyongyang that honors the Soviet role in the liberation of Korea.<sup>165</sup> (see Figure 7.8). The day ended with a large youth and student celebration in Kim Il-sung Square.<sup>166</sup> (see Figure 7.9). In short, as the landmine incident began to escalate tensions in Korea, North Koreans took time to memorialize the Kims and celebrate their anti-Japanese and anti-U.S. imperialist traditions, and included their Russian allies.

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<sup>160</sup> KCNA, “NDC Spokesman Warns U.S. of Its Strongest Military Counteraction,” August 15, 2015, <http://kcnawatch.nknews.org/article/fcgs> (accessed September 27, 2015).

<sup>161</sup> KCNA, “Kim Jong Un Visits Kumsusan Palace of Sun,” August 15, 2015, <http://kcnawatch.nknews.org/article/fcby> (accessed September 27, 2015).

<sup>162</sup> KCNA, “Wreaths Laid before Revolutionary Martyrs Cemetery on Mt. Taesong,” August 15, 2015, <http://kcnawatch.nknews.org/article/fch0> (accessed September 27, 2015).

<sup>163</sup> KCNA, “Wreaths Laid at Patriotic Martyrs Cemetery.” <http://kcnawatch.nknews.org/article/fchp> (accessed September 27, 2015).

<sup>164</sup> KCNA, “Wreaths Laid before Revolutionary Martyrs Cemetery on Mt. Taesong.”

<sup>165</sup> KCNA, “Floral Tribute Paid to Martyrs of Soviet Army,” August 15, 2015, <http://kcnawatch.nknews.org/article/fchp> (accessed September 27, 2015).

<sup>166</sup> KCNA, “Evening Gala of Young People Marks Anniversary of Korea’s Liberation,” August 15, 2015, <http://kcnawatch.nknews.org/article/fchi> (accessed September 27, 2015).





**Figure 7.9.** North Korean youth and students celebrate liberation day in Pyongyang, August 15, 2015, Source, KCNA.

### 7.5.2 Kim Jong-un Fabricates a Crisis to Demonstrate Leadership

On August 16, a spokesman for the Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of Korea continued to attack President Park in the South for staging nuclear war exercises, anti-regime leaflet operations, human rights allegations, and “other rows against the DPRK.” It accused her of dampening “the aspiration of all Koreans and their efforts to make August 15 an important occasion of north-south reconciliation and national unity by conducting anti-north psychological broadcasting and leaflet scattering operations in the wake of the fabrication of the ‘mine explosion,’ a poor farce.”<sup>167</sup> On August 18, *Rodong Sinmun* stated Korea was in a state of war due to exercise UFG, and if the U.S. and South Korea wanted to test the power of the KPA, “they will meet the end more miserable than what it met in the past Korean war.”<sup>168</sup>

<sup>167</sup> KCNA, “Spokesman for CPRK Slams Park Geun Hye’s ‘Address on August 15’,” August 16, 2015, <http://kcnawatch.nknews.org/article/fcn7> (accessed September 27, 2015).

<sup>168</sup> KCNA, “Rodong Sinmun Raps Ulji Freedom Guardian,” August 18, 2015, <http://kcnawatch.nknews.org/article/fck8> (accessed September 27, 2015).

The KPA finally responded by firing rockets across the DMZ on August 20 and the South Korean army quickly returned counter artillery fires into North Korea. The U.S. urged Pyongyang to cease its provocations as tensions quickly escalated on the peninsula. North Korea chose not to return fire<sup>169</sup> and the next day denied responsibility for the landmine incident and accused the “south Korean puppet military gangsters” of manufacturing the “doubtful” landmine incident in the DMZ to justify the resumption of its “anti-DPRK psychological warfare.” It called the loudspeaker and “leaflet-scattering” operations an act of war, and announced that the General Staff of the KPA issued an ultimatum to the South Korean military that unless it ceased the anti-regime loudspeaker broadcasts and “removes all psywar [psychological warfare] means within 48 hours,” Seoul would face “strong military action.” The KCNA later claimed Seoul had fabricated the “shell fire by the north” and used it as pretext to fired “dozens of shells on the DPRK's inviolable territory.” As a result, Kim Jong-un called an emergency “enlarged” meeting of the KWP’s CMC during the evening of August 20, which included senior leaders of the KPA General Staff, frontline commanders, senior officials of intelligence and security services, leading officials of the KWP, and “officials in charge of external affairs.” The meeting began with a presentation by the RGB on the military provocations along the “central western sectors of the front” and discussed options for “political and military counteractions.”<sup>170</sup> (see Figure 7.10).

More importantly, it was also revealed Kim had “issued an order of the supreme commander of the Korean People's Army that the frontline large combined units of the KPA should enter a wartime state to be fully battle ready to launch surprise operations and the area along the front be put in a semi-war state.” Interestingly, the readout from the meeting noted that “Commanders were appointed and dispatched to the relevant sectors of the front to *command*

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<sup>169</sup> Fifield, “S. Korea agrees to end broadcasts as North expresses regret for provocations.”

<sup>170</sup> KCNA, “Kim Jong Un Guides Emergency Enlarged Meeting of WPK Central Military Commission,” August 21, 2015, <http://kcnawatch.nknews.org/article/fcrr> (accessed September 27, 2015). RGB is referred to here as the General Reconnaissance Bureau.



military actions.”<sup>171</sup> This implies that similar to provocations in 2010, key commanders were selected by the central authority (the Kims) to exercise delegated command authority along the front lines as the situation escalated. This may be the reason why when there are perceived failures of the plan or its execution, some personnel are held accountable.



**Figure 7.10.** Kim Jong-un demonstrates his leadership by guiding the emergency meeting of the KWP's Central Military Commission, Source, KCNA.

South Korea responded by ordering its own troops to prepare for war on August 21, 2015.<sup>172</sup> The U.S. and South Korea also briefly halted exercise UFG to coordinate a measured but strong response to North Korean provocations and hinted U.S. strategic assets would be deployed to Korea again.<sup>173</sup> The

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<sup>171</sup> KCNA, “Kim Jong Un Guides Emergency Enlarged Meeting of WPK Central Military Commission,” August 21, 2015, <http://kcnawatch.nknews.org/article/fcrr> (accessed September 27, 2015).

<sup>172</sup> Park Ju-min and Tony Munroe, “Tensions rise as North and South exchange fire,” August 20, 2015, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/08/21/us-northkorea-southkorea-artillery-idUSKCN0QP0RO20150821> (accessed August 29, 2015).

<sup>173</sup> Ashley Rowland and Yoo Kyong Chang, “Agreement to ease Korea tensions raises hope of better relations,” *The Stars and Stripes*, August 25, 2015,

situation began to escalate as Seoul “vowed to hit back with overwhelming strength” in case of further North Korean attacks against South Korea.<sup>174</sup> On August 22, North Korea’s Foreign Ministry “clarified that it did not fire even a single bullet or single shell at the enemy’s side first nor it made any accidental firing.” Then it blamed the South Koreans for “a carefully calculated provocation,” which it claimed was “a trite method of the successive south Korean rulers to cook up a shocking incident in the area along the MDL whenever they face a crisis in a bid to *divert* the attention of public at home and abroad elsewhere and seek a way out of it.”<sup>175</sup> What was even more telling was *Rodong Sinmun* commentary about the South’s psychological operations. It stated, “The army and people of the DPRK who value the sovereignty and dignity of the country as their life and soul can not allow in the least the south Korean puppet warmongers’ desperate efforts to destroy the ideology and social system of the DPRK.”<sup>176</sup> Just as the crisis appeared to escalate out of control, the North Koreans proposed high-level talks.

The two sides met from August 22 to 24 at Panmunjom, and after Pyongyang finally expressed “regret” for the land-mine attack on August 24, Seoul agreed to shut down the loud speaker operations along the DMZ. Both sides also agreed to resume family reunions and continue discussions to resolve other differences. The U.S. State Department welcomed the agreement and hoped “it leads to decreasing tensions on the peninsula.”<sup>177</sup> Some argued the key takeaway from this incident was the fact that the “South Korean propaganda broadcasts were a more powerful weapon against the North than firing back with substantial artillery.” In other words, Kim Jong-un feared these

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<http://www.stripes.com/news/agreement-to-ease-korea-tensions-raises-hope-of-better-relations-1.364501> (accessed September 26, 2015).

<sup>174</sup> Fox News, “South Korea vows response to ‘provocations’ from North after exchange of fire,” August 21, 2015, <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2015/08/21/nkorea-warns-war-after-exchange-fire-with-south/> (accessed October 2, 2015).

<sup>175</sup> KCNA, “DPRK FM on Situation That Reached Brink of War,” August 22, 2015, <http://kcnawatch.nknews.org/article/fcui> (accessed September 27, 2015).

<sup>176</sup> KCNA, “Enemy’s Psychological Warfare Should Be Punished: Rodong Sinmun,” August 22, 2015, <http://kcnawatch.nknews.org/article/fcwi> (accessed September 27, 2015).

<sup>177</sup> Fifield, “S. Korea agrees to end broadcasts as North expresses regret for provocations.”

broadcasts so much, “he threatened to go to war over words.” The broadcasts would undermine his legitimacy by describing the prosperous life in the South to the KPA soldiers along the DMZ, who are mostly from good families, and would eventually spread this “poisonous” information to the North’s elite with their cell phones. Bruce Bennett argued, “While this was short of an apology, even the expression of regret surprised some experts, since many senior North Korean elites would understand this to be a quasi-apology.”<sup>178</sup>



On August 24, *Rodong Sinmun* announced North Korea could not ignore the fact that the timing of Seoul’s provocations coincided with exercise UFG to

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<sup>178</sup> Bruce Bennett, “Words as Weapons: South Korean propaganda exposed a weak spot for Kim Jong Un and his regime,” *U.S. News and World Report*, August 28, 2015, <http://www.usnews.com/opinion/blogs/world-report/2015/08/28/why-north-koreas-kim-jong-un-fears-south-korean-propaganda> (accessed October 2, 2015).

initiate an “all-out war against the DPRK.”<sup>179</sup> The next day, Kim Jong-un continued to demonstrate his leadership by calling for a national meeting to commemorate the 55<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Kim Jong-il’s “*Songun* Revolutionary Leadership.” At the meeting, the Minister of the People’s Armed Forces, General Pak Yong-Sik highlighted that Kim Jong-il had led the “fierce military confrontation against the imperialists on the forefront for over 50 years,” and he “prioritized the military affairs above anything else and regarded the KPA as the pillar and main force of the *Songun* revolution to defend socialism despite obstacles that were laid in the way ahead of the revolution.” The meeting claimed Kim Jong-il’s efforts made North Korea “an impregnable fortress for self-defence that no invaders dare provoke.” Kim Jong-un has inherited the “*Songun* revolutionary idea” and is working tirelessly to develop a powerful revolutionary army with “various kinds of strike means of Korean style.” The KPA was ready to fight any kind of war against its enemies, to include a nuclear war.<sup>180</sup> The aim of the meeting to justify Kim Jong-il’s *Songun* politics suggests it is plausible that North Korea may have manufactured the landmine incident to celebrate the legacy of *Songun* as well as its anti-Japanese guerrilla legacy. (see Figure 7.11).

On August 27, the North continued its harsh rhetoric against exercise UFG by warning that its declaration to “turn the base of aggression into the sea of fire and mercilessly wipe aggressors out to the last one is not an empty talk.”<sup>181</sup> On the other hand, Kim Yang-gon, a member of the Political Bureau and secretary of the Central Committee of the KWP, appeared to send a positive signal to Seoul regarding the high-level meeting that occurred from August 22 to 24 at Panmunjom. He noted that the meeting “reflected the will and stand of both sides to prevent armed conflicts, de-escalate tensions and

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<sup>179</sup> KCNA, “Rodong Sinmun Terms S. Korean Puppet Forces’ Provocation Deliberate and Premeditated Move for War against North,” August 24, 2015, <http://kcnawatch.nknews.org/article/fc23> (accessed September 27, 2015).

<sup>180</sup> KCNA, “National Meeting Marks 55th Anniversary of Kim Jong Il’s Start of *Songun* Revolutionary Leadership,” August 25, 2015, <http://kcnawatch.nknews.org/article/fc3s> (accessed September 27, 2015).

<sup>181</sup> KCNA, “Army and People of DPRK Confident of Victory: Rodong Sinmun,” August 27, 2015, <http://kcnawatch.nknews.org/article/fc87> (accessed September 27, 2015).

promote the development of the bilateral relations.” Kim argued the negotiations resulted in restoring stability to Northeast Asia and “offered an opportunity of a dramatic turn in achieving peace, stability, reconciliation and cooperation between the north and the south.” He claimed the lengthy meeting between the two sides opened up “an epochal phase for turning misfortune into blessings in the north-south relations. The public at home and abroad are unanimously welcoming the north and the south for preventing the situation from plunging into an unpredictable conflict and joining hands for reconciliation.” Kim Yang-gon’s benignity urged both sides to learn an important lesson from the recent crisis by not losing “reason and temper when complicated problems arise in the inter-Korean relations but make efforts to prevent the recurrence of such incident.” Kim Yang-gon committed to making “positive efforts to improve the north-south relations as desired by all the Koreans.”<sup>182</sup>

After Kim Yong-gon provided his interpretation of the negotiations at Panmunjom and the way ahead, Kim Jong-un called yet another enlarged meeting of the CMC on August 28, 2015. This meeting included senior members of the KPA, the Ministry of the People's Armed Forces, all the service chiefs, corps-level commanders, intelligence and security services, KWP Central Committee, the Cabinet, Foreign Ministry officials, and Provincial Party officials. (see Figure 7.12). According to KCNA, Kim Jong-un examined the performance of the KWP and the North Korean government during the recent crisis and noted the following:<sup>183</sup>

He said that this time the DPRK proposed the north-south high-level urgent contact on its own initiative and put under control the situation which inched close to an armed conflict, thereby clearing the dark clouds of war that hung over the Korean nation and defended peace and stability on the Korean peninsula and in the region. *Noting that peace restored under the situation that reached the brink of a war was by no means something achieved*

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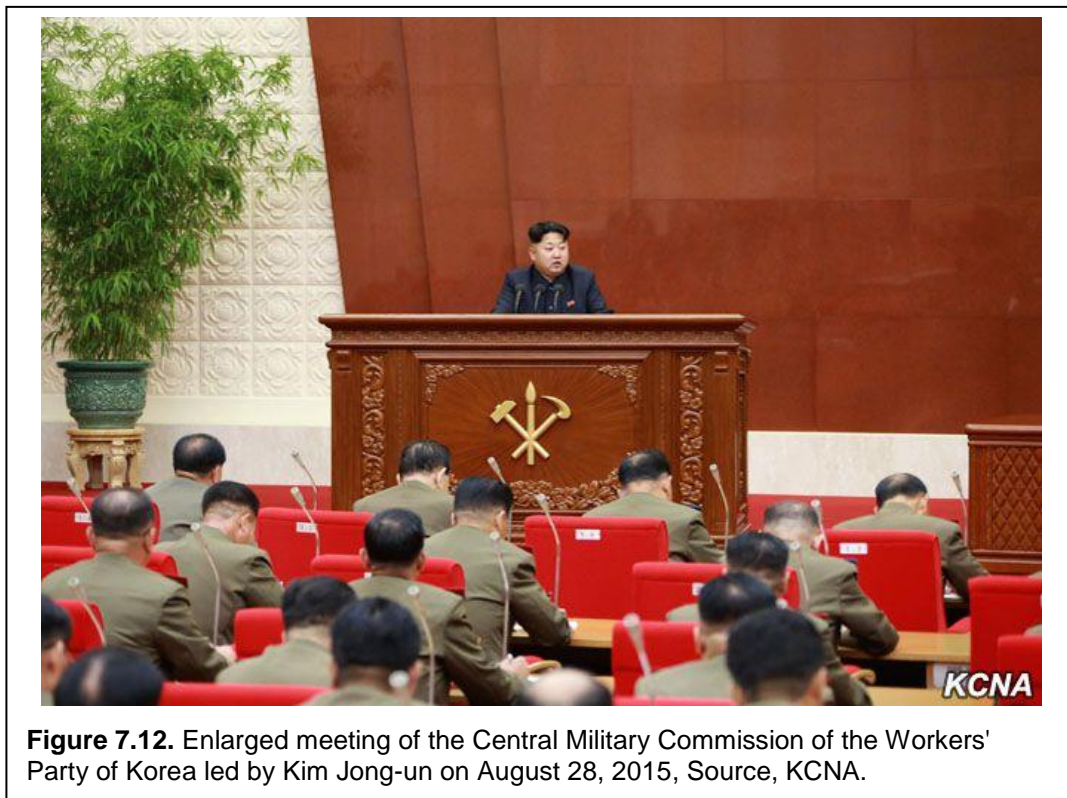
<sup>182</sup> KCNA, “North, South Should Improve Relations on Basis of Results of Urgent Contact: Kim Yang Gon,” August 27, 2015, <http://kcnawatch.nknews.org/article/fc84> (accessed September 27, 2015).

<sup>183</sup> KCNA, “Kim Jong Un Guides Enlarged Meeting of WPK Central Military Commission,” August 27, 2015, <http://kcnawatch.nknews.org/article/fdam> (accessed September 27, 2015).



*on the negotiating table but thanks to the tremendous military muscle with the nuclear deterrent for self-defence built by the great party as a pivot and matchless ranks single-mindedly united around the party, he emphasized that the armed forces of Songun and the single-minded unity that have grown stronger amid the tempest of the times always serve as an essential guarantee for defending peace on the peninsula.*<sup>184</sup>

The outcome of the meeting suggests that the primary aim of the landmine incident was to clearly demonstrate Kim Jong-un's competent leadership as well as reaffirming the righteous path of his father's *Songun* policy and pursuit of nuclear weapons development.



**Figure 7.12.** Enlarged meeting of the Central Military Commission of the Workers' Party of Korea led by Kim Jong-un on August 28, 2015, Source, KCNA.

### **7.5.3 Pyongyang Warns Seoul and Washington after Negotiations**

On August 31, 2015, Pyongyang denounced exercise UFG after it ended on August 28. The Kim regime reminded Koreans on both sides of the DMZ

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<sup>184</sup> KCNA, "Kim Jong Un Guides Enlarged Meeting of WPK Central Military Commission."

that in spite of the claims the annual UFG exercises were defensive; their true intent was offensive in nature. Pyongyang urged the South to take advantage of the “trend of détente” resulting from the recent high-level negotiations at Panmunjom. It urged Seoul to stop the provocative exercises “with outsiders targeting the dialogue partner and positively respond to the joint efforts for defusing the danger of war and achieving peace and reunification on the Korean Peninsula.”<sup>185</sup> Pyongyang claimed “there is nothing impossible when they settle all issues arising in the inter-Korean relations in the spirit of *By Our Nation Itself*.” It argued that both sides had to embrace the August 24 agreement “as a sacred commitment to the nation,” in order for it to yield “rich results.”<sup>186</sup>

A couple of days later, Pyongyang took issue with the way Seoul characterized its expression of regret as an apology. North Koreans refuted the notion that their expression of “regret” was an “‘admission’ and ‘apology,’” for the suspicious landmine incident in the DMZ. The North had problems with the way some South Koreans were interpreting the word regret to mean an “apology of north Korean style,” with all the legal and political implications of an apology. North Korea claimed there was a similar landmine incident along the DMZ on August 23 but Seoul remained silent. It claimed that landmine blast occur regularly in the DMZ and clarified its position regarding the August 4 incident. KCNA stated, “In a word, ‘regret’ is no more than an expression that ‘I am sorry for the case’.”<sup>187</sup> On the other hand, Kim Kwan-jin, the lead South Korean negotiator at the talks, described North Korea’s “expression of ‘regret’ as an apology.”<sup>188</sup> North Korea’s Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of

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<sup>185</sup> KCNA, “S. Korean Authorities Urged to Stop Staging War Drills for Aggression against Dialogue Partner together with Outsiders,” August 31, 2015, <http://kcnawatch.nknews.org/article/fdhi> (accessed September 27, 2015).

<sup>186</sup> KCNA, “Rodong Sinmun Hails Publication of Joint Press Release at North-South High-Level Urgent Contact,” August 31, 2015, <http://kcnawatch.nknews.org/article/fdg5> (accessed September 27, 2015).

<sup>187</sup> KCNA, “S. Korean Authorities Urged Not to Behave Contrary to Hard-won Atmosphere of Improving Inter-Korean Relations,” September 2, 2015, <http://kcnawatch.nknews.org/article/fdjx> (accessed September 27, 2015).

<sup>188</sup> Kim Hyung-jin and Foster Klug, “After marathon meetings, Kim Kwan-jin says ‘not ready to talk about a summit’,” *The Associated Press*, August 24, 2015,

Korea also berated Park Geun-hye for claiming the “constructive role” that Beijing played to de-escalate the situation in Korea. Pyongyang viewed this as an insult and emphasized it had proposed the high-level talks “on its own initiative.” The point was improving Korean relations depended on Koreans themselves, “not outsiders.”<sup>189</sup>

Not surprisingly, there were reports that Beijing was massing its soldiers along the North Korean border during the crisis, and some observers believed the move was a not so veiled message for Kim to “settle down.” It was also intended to reassure the international community that China was monitoring the situation very carefully.<sup>190</sup> Still others claimed both Beijing and Moscow pressured Kim to resolve the crisis.<sup>191</sup> While North Korea refrained from criticizing China, it demanded the withdrawal of U.S. troops from South Korea as the only way to achieve “peace and stability of the peninsula.”<sup>192</sup> On September 8, 2015, North Korea cited the deployment of three B-2 bombers from Guam during exercise UFG as a prelude to a “preemptive attack on the DPRK.” This was ultimately viewed as an attempt by Washington to bring “down the DPRK” with “a single strike.”<sup>193</sup> North Korea responded by providing an update on its space and nuclear programs.

On September 14, the North’s director of the National Aerospace Development Administration (NADA) announced his organization was in the “final phase” of developing “a new earth observation satellite for weather forecast,” and was also making significant progress in the development of a

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<http://www.militarytimes.com/story/military/2015/08/24/seoul-talks-between-2-koreas-end-amid-rising-tensions/32271971/> (accessed October 3, 2015).

<sup>189</sup> KCNA, “S. Korean Authorities Denounced for Creating Complexity in North-South Relations,” September 3, 2015, <http://kcnawatch.nknews.org/article/fdox> (accessed September 27, 2015).

<sup>190</sup> Paul Alexander, “North Korea’s Kim Jong Un flawed, yet provides stability,” *The Stars and Stripes*, September 15, 2015, <http://www.stripes.com/news/pacific/analysts-north-korea-s-kim-jong-un-flawed-yet-provides-stability-1.368202> (accessed October 3, 2015).

<sup>191</sup> Rowland and Yoo, “Agreement to ease Korea tensions raises hope of better relations.”

<sup>192</sup> KCNA, “Minju Joseon Demands Withdrawal of U.S. Troops from S. Korea,” September 6, 2015, <http://kcnawatch.nknews.org/article/fdgo> (accessed September 27, 2015).

<sup>193</sup> KCNA, “KCNA Commentary Lays Bare U.S. Scenario for Invading DPRK,” September 8, 2015, <http://kcnawatch.nknews.org/article/fdua> (accessed September 27, 2015).



“geostationary satellite.”<sup>194</sup> His counterpart in North Korea’s Atomic Energy Institute of the DPRK indicated that the Institute was making progress in the “research and production” of “*nuclear weapons with various missions in quality and quantity as required by the prevailing situation.*” He warned North Korea is fully prepared to deal with U.S. and others’ hostile policy with nuclear weapons.<sup>195</sup>

This sets the stage for further provocations in the near future, but what does it suggest about Kim Jong-un’s developing leadership and his ability to wield smart power? According to recent reports, several North Korea observers acknowledged Kim had demonstrated his competence by performing better during this crisis than anticipated. According to David Garretson, a retired professor from the University of Maryland campus in Seoul, Kim “has finally got a feel for things,” and his “experience of juggling many balls has matured him.” He also demonstrated that he was “more rational” and seemed to have “good command and control” of the situation. Kim Jung-bong, a former South Korean official, agreed by stating “Kim Jong Un is much more calculating and careful than we knew... We have to take him seriously.” According to another professor from a Korean university in Seoul, Yoo Chan-yul, Seoul’s “decisiveness and refusal to back down on the propaganda broadcasts” led Kim to seek a face saving way out. However, Kim “showed political savvy” by “backing down.” Yoo concluded, “He’s a real tough cookie, more than we realized...He may be tyrannical and vicious, but maybe Kim Jong Un is realistic as well.”<sup>196</sup> As a result of the incident, some observers appear to show respect and admiration for Kim Jong-un, but many in the U.S. seem to think he lacks competence and is more volatile, reckless, and unpredictable than his father.

Others like Scott Snyder from the Council on Foreign Relations argued the August agreement was a “modest start” to establish a more cooperative

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<sup>194</sup> KCNA, “NADA Director on Successes in Outer Space Development,” September 14, 2015, <http://kcnawatch.nknews.org/article/fd3g> (accessed September 27, 2015).

<sup>195</sup> KCNA, “Director of Atomic Energy Institute of DPRK on Its Nuclear Activities,” September 15, 2015, <http://kcnawatch.nknews.org/article/fd4u> (accessed September 27, 2015).

<sup>196</sup> Rowland and Yoo, “Agreement to ease Korea tensions raises hope of better relations.”

relationship between the two Koreas. More importantly, he argued that the crisis demonstrated that “both Koreas are vulnerable to each other – the North fears the spread of propaganda from Seoul, and the South’s economy is vulnerable during periods of military tension with the North.” He argued that whether the resolution of this incident can become a turning point for the two sides depends on their willingness to honor the agreement so they can “minimize their respective points of vulnerability.”<sup>197</sup> This is what Nye meant when he raised the issue of relative costs and degree of interdependency. In other words, which side is more dependent on the other for successful outcomes? Is avoiding North Korean instability more important to Seoul than maintaining its hardline position regarding its propaganda broadcasts? If Seoul values its economy and maintaining its way of life more than breaking the cycle of provocations, then North Korea will continue to manipulate this vulnerability and use this asymmetry in interdependence as a source of power.<sup>198</sup>

According to Ken Gause, it would be premature to suggest Seoul has finally broken this asymmetry in the relationship. Gause argued, “If something were to happen to Kim, the country would suffer severe leadership problems,” and the regime could suffer “a nasty collapse.” If that occurs, “the problems of the Mideast would pale by comparison.”<sup>199</sup> This suggests Seoul and others are still more dependent on the North Koreans in the bargaining process and Kim can continue to exploit this as long as he is skilled in converting this asymmetry into strategies that achieve desired outcomes. Finally, what does the smart power framework suggest about the landmine incident?

#### **7.5.4 Kim Employs Landmines to Show Legitimacy and Leadership**

First, what was North Korea’s desired outcome for the landmine incident? North Korea most likely manufactured the landmine incident to attract the international spotlight back on the regime to continue its war of legitimacy with

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<sup>197</sup> Rowland and Yoo, “Agreement to ease Korea tensions raises hope of better relations.”

<sup>198</sup> Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1990), p. 30.

<sup>199</sup> Paul Alexander, “North Korea’s Kim Jong Un flawed, yet provides stability.”

South Korea. In anticipation of the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Korea's liberation from Japan, it touted Kim Il-sung's anti-Japanese legacy and attacked former President Park Chung-hee's historical ties to Japan as well as his younger daughter's controversial perspectives on Japan's colonial legacy. These activities coupled with Pyongyang turning back time by 30 minutes were likely aimed to weaken President Park and her conservative government's legitimacy by manipulating Korea's colonial history against them. When the landmine incident began to escalate tensions after the loudspeaker broadcasts and the subsequent exchange of artillery fire, Pyongyang called for a high-level meeting and offered its regret for the incident. This persuaded Seoul to cease its loudspeaker broadcasts as long as Pyongyang ceased its provocations. However, after the negotiations had successfully de-escalated the situation, North Korea refused to acknowledge responsibility for the landmine incident by arguing that "mine explosions" occur often in the DMZ.

The North also took time to refute Seoul's characterization of its offer of regret as an apology by noting that its representatives were merely saying it was sorry that it happened. Kim Jong-un seemed to use the crisis to message to North Koreans that he was competent and in control of the situation and claimed that the landmine crisis was resolved because of Kim Jong-Il's *Songun* policy and nuclear weapons, not negotiations. This indicates that Kim was attempting to highlight the achievements of both his father and grandfather to bolster his legitimacy. On a positive note, Pyongyang indicated that as long as the South was prepared to honor the spirit of the results of the meeting, which included cessation of its psychological operations, it was willing to make progress to improve relations with Seoul. Despite some progress at the negotiations, the North continued to exploit exercise UFG as provocative war preparations, especially the overt deployment of B-2 bombers. It used the flyover to reaffirm its allegation of U.S. hostile policy and justified the expansion of its nuclear and space programs.

Second, what forms of power behavior did Pyongyang employ during the landmine incident? North Korea likely used special troops to emplace the

landmines to attack South Korean troops in the DMZ to gain international attention. In the event the provocation escalated, Kim was prepared to seek high-level negotiations and offer an expression of regret, which had been used effectively to de-escalate in the past. However, the North continued to pressure the U.S. and South Korea for staging their provocative “war” exercises.

Third, what resources were available to implement the strategy? As noted, Kim probably used some variant of his special forces to emplace the landmines and was prepared to employ his tactical artillery near the DMZ to heighten tensions. Once Kim gained the international spotlight, he probably never intended to strike the South Korean loudspeakers after issuing the ultimatum. In other words, it was a calculated tactic to heighten tensions and to seize the day to message North Korea’s anti-Japanese guerrilla legacy and U.S. presence in the South. He also made it known that his father’s *Songun* politics was the reason why North Korea was able to maintain its sovereignty. In the end, Kim’s use of diplomacy to de-escalate the situation demonstrated that he was perhaps more rational despite some backtracking on the expression of regret for the incident. The North also used the media to roll out various senior officials and government entities to signal threats, desire for engagement, and provide the rationale for policy positions such as *Juche*, *Songun*, *Byungjin*, nuclear weapons, and the civilian space program.

Fourth, how did North Korea view its probability of success? The covert use of landmines was at the lower end of the conflict spectrum, and as North Korea argued, mine explosions in the DMZ are not unusual in the DMZ. Hence, the CMC probably assumed it could control escalation as long as it denied responsibility while offering expression of regret. It was also prepared to call for negotiations after issuing an ultimatum because the North was not going to follow through knowing that South Korea was prepared to retaliate. The December 2010 ultimatum against South Korea’s planned LFX in the Northwest Islands demonstrated the North Koreans are not foolish despite their threatening rhetoric. When it decided to pursue diplomacy, it probably expected

difficult and lengthy negotiations, but its exit strategy was to offer an expression of regret. As discussed, they had used it before to good effect.

Fifth, what were the policy preferences of key actors? The Kim regime probably intended to remind all Koreans it was more legitimate than the Park regime in the South as the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Korea's liberation from Japanese colonial rule was looming on August 15, 2015. As discussed, it even turned back the clock 30 minutes to show the world that it was reclaiming its sovereignty from yet another vestige of Japanese imperialism. Even as the landmine incident began to escalate tensions, North Korea took time to memorialize Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il and celebrated their anti-Japanese and anti-U.S. imperialist traditions with their friends and allies in Pyongyang, including a Russian delegation who came to memorialize their own role in the liberation of North Korea. What this indicates is that sometimes North Korean rhetoric is not always about provocations, but more about the ongoing war of words with Seoul and demonstrating that the new Supreme Leader is competent and fully capable of protecting their sovereignty. Most importantly, he is able to do so because of Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il's revolutionary achievements.

Simultaneously, Pyongyang continued its harsh rhetoric against exercise UFG and the "large-scale psychological warfare" operations that resumed against the Kim regime after the landmine incident. It managed to stop the South Korean loudspeaker broadcasts along the DMZ, but it was conditional. As soon as North Korea resumes provocations, Seoul is likely to resume the loudspeaker broadcasts. Hence, the regime's celebration of Kim Il-sung's anti-Japanese legacy and Kim Jong-il's *Songun* politics might have been more significant to Kim Jong-un than stopping loudspeaker broadcasts along the DMZ. In other words, if the loud speaker broadcasts or anti-regime leaflet operations are truly a survival interest for the regime as some have suggested, Kim would be willing to use force to deter them in the future. What might have been more important for Kim during this incident was to come up with a better story than Seoul to gain the upper hand in the war of legitimacy to consolidate

his rule. The only story that had any chance of winning was the manipulation of the regime's anti-Japanese guerrilla legacy and arguably its *Juche* ideology of self-reliance as the Koreans celebrated liberation from Japan's colonial rule. It also continued its rhetoric against U.S.-South Korean combined exercises and called for the withdrawal of U.S. troops.

Nevertheless, what is perhaps most important is the fact that some in Seoul viewed Pyongyang's willingness to negotiate as a sign of weakness. A former South Korean official indicated Pyongyang was "begging" to negotiate with Seoul because it could not "follow through on its threat of military action if the speakers were not turned off." They miscalculated by threatening to use force and "the only option for North Korea was to beg for a negotiated solution." Some observers even concluded that "Pyongyang's recent eagerness to hold talks with Seoul could be a sign of domestic vulnerability for Kim." Senior South Korean officials appear convinced that North Korea backed off and chose to issue an apology because it had no other option, and signaled Seoul must continue its hardline approach during future provocations.<sup>200</sup>

Moreover, the dispute over South Korea's use of psychological operations is also not likely to be over. In addition to the loudspeaker broadcasts, Pyongyang has declared for several years that the anti-North Korean balloon launches were a declaration of war but has been unable to stop them. This issue was highlighted in October 2014 when a South Korean NGO, run by a North Korean defector, announced the plan to launch balloons ten days in advance of the launch. This was perceived by local residents, conservative and progressive politicians as self-promotion and unnecessarily provocative. This diverse group of South Koreans called for the cancellation of the launch to avoid "unneeded conflict" along the border.<sup>201</sup> This suggests that the recent agreement to halt South Korean loudspeaker broadcasts could justify

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<sup>200</sup> Anna Fifield, "North Korean Leader says his nukes, not negotiations, avoided war," *Washington Post*, August 29, 2015, <http://korea.stripes.com/news/north-korean-leader-says-his-nukes-not-negotiation-avoided-war> (accessed August 29, 2015).

<sup>201</sup> Robert Lauer, "North Korea calls balloon launch a declaration of war," NK News.org, October 24, 2014, <http://www.nknews.org/2014/10/north-korea-calls-balloon-launch-a-declaration-of-war/> (accessed September 25, 2015).

Pyongyang's subsequent demands to halt future NGO balloon launches, especially those attempting to politicize the launches with the media. Again, South Koreans cannot assume the solution to deal with North Korean provocations has been realized by relying only on effective self-defense.

While the U.S. reassured South Korea by deploying the B-2 bombers again in 2015, there was much speculation about the worsening China-North Korean relations after Kim refused to attend China's military parade celebrating the end of the WW II in September 2015. When Kim sent Choe Ryong-hae in his place, he was "relegated to the sideline," while Park Geun-hye was placed close to Xi Jinping. Some argued this was a "loud and clear" signal that North Korea "exists solely because of its utility to China as buffer state."<sup>202</sup> However, their relationship appears to be improving after the landmine incident.

#### **7.5.5 Indications China-North Korea Relations Could Be Improving**

Liu Yunshan, a member of the Chinese Politburo Standing Committee, visited Pyongyang to observe North Korea's military parade in mid-October 2015.<sup>203</sup> Liu became the senior ranking Chinese official to visit Pyongyang since Kim Jong-un assumed power, and reports suggest China is "now censoring criticism of North Korea online," openly encouraging its netizens to "stop mocking" Kim. (see Figure 7.13). On October 11, an article in Chinese social media touted Kim as "extremely hardworking" and criticized Chinese liberals for "'frequently shoot[ing] off opinions about a cooling in China-North Korea relations, or Chinese abandonment of the North.' But nothing could be further from the truth, it argued; Kim had simply been 'busy' with internal governance' since ascending" to power. This turnabout in Beijing seems to suggest China is acknowledging it is better to have a "pliant neighbor" than

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<sup>202</sup> Alexandre Dor, "North Korea's Growing Isolation," *The Diplomat*, September 5, 2015, <http://thediplomat.com/2015/09/north-koreas-growing-isolation/> (accessed November 14, 2015).

<sup>203</sup> David Wertime, "Chinese Censors Are Giving North Korea a P.R. Makeover," *Foreign Policy*, October 12, 2015, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/10/12/chinese-censors-give-north-korea-kim-jong-un-a-public-relations-makeover/> (accessed November 14, 2015).

watch it collapse or being absorbed by South Korea. In short, Beijing seems to be touting North Korea as “a fragile nation eager to follow China’s path.”<sup>204</sup>



**Figure 7.13.** Kim Jong-un and Liu Yunshan share the stage during North Korea’s military parade celebrating the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the KWP in October 10, 2015.  
<http://www.ibtimes.com/china-north-korea-relations-will-kim-jong-un-visit-xi-jinping-beijing-2139030>

On October 25, 2015, the two countries celebrated the 65<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Chinese intervention during the Korean War at the graves of the Chinese People’s Volunteers (CPV) martyrs and the Friendship Tower in Pyongyang.<sup>205</sup> According to another report from Beijing, Xi Jinping sent Kim a congratulatory message on the anniversary of the KWP’s founding in October 2015 and acknowledged his role in “developing North Korea’s economy and improving the livelihood of its people.” Some view this as Xi’s “endorsement of Kim.” The report also indicated Kim may visit China during the first half of 2016 to meet with Xi and that is likely to bolster the legitimacy of Kim. If the visit occurs, it would reinforce the view that Kim has consolidated his power and is more

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<sup>204</sup> David Wertime, “Chinese Censors Are Giving North Korea a P.R. Makeover.”

<sup>205</sup> KCNA, “Wreaths Laid before Friendship Tower,” October 25, 2015, <http://kcnawatch.nknews.org/article/fgggb> (accessed October 28, 2015).



confident in his role as the Supreme Leader,<sup>206</sup> and could jump start the 6PT as a major takeaway for the visit.

#### 7.5.6 Kim Jong-un Pays Respect to the Last Manchurian Guerrilla



**Figure 7.14.** Marshal Ri UI Sol funeral procession in Pyongyang on November, 11, 2015.  
<https://www.nknews.org/2015/11/n-korean-marshal-ri-ul-sols-funeral-held-in-pyongyang/>

In early November 2015, Marshal Ri UI-sol, the last of Kim Il-sung's Manchurian guerrillas died at the age of 94. On November 11, 2015, Kim Jong-un memorialized the event with a state funeral worthy of a loyal follower of his grandfather. Thousands of North Koreans reportedly lined the streets for the funeral procession before Ri was put to rest at the Revolutionary Martyrs Cemetery where the rest of his comrades are buried. Kim Jong-un honored Ri at the cemetery by "laying the soil with his bare hands." He had served the Kim family as the Chief of their bodyguards before retirement. Despite his old age, Ri also played a key role in facilitating Kim Jong-un's outreach efforts with the

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<sup>206</sup> NKnews.org Editorial, "Diplomatic sources: Kim Jong Un to finally meet Xi Jinping," Xilu, November 5, 2015, <http://www.xilu.com/20151105/1000010000897105.html> (accessed November 13, 2015). Note: the article at this website is in Chinese but it was translated into English by NKNews.org.

“other elder officials in North Korea,” and actively supported his succession by writing propaganda articles on his behalf. According to Nam Seong-wook from Korea University, Kim’s message for the elites is “he is the legitimate heir to the historical legacy that Ri has lived throughout his life,” and “anyone who serves with loyalty until death will be awarded by the republic herself.”<sup>207</sup>

As noted above, Kim Jong-un appears to be consolidating his power and is prepared to move beyond his reign of terror by using more milder forms of punishment. Perhaps he also realizes that “force without legitimacy brings chaos; legitimacy without force will be overthrown.”<sup>208</sup> Moreover, even after legitimacy has been established, the followers obey the ruler for his exceptional qualities and they remain loyal as long as the ruler’s charisma “is proven by evidence.” In short, Kim Jong-un will have to demonstrate his “heroic strength” or the people could lose their faith in his ability.<sup>209</sup> This means Kim will have to seek more opportunities to demonstrate his charismatic leadership. He will have to show continued improvement in the North Korean economy and look for opportunities to demonstrate his competence as the Supreme Leader.

#### **7.5.7 North Korea Announces Its First Hydrogen Bomb Test**

On January 6, 2016, North Korea announced that Kim Jong-un had “signed the final written order” to conduct its First H-bomb test on January 3, 2016. The announcement made a point of emphasizing that the test was “conducted under the strategic resolve of the Workers’ Party of Korea.”<sup>210</sup> The U.S. and the international community quickly condemned the North’s fourth nuclear test and vowed “to punish it” for the test. Washington also disputed Pyongyang’s claim it had conducted a H-bomb test. It initially assessed that the test was more likely to be another atomic weapons test and its Ambassador to the UN indicated the UNSC committed to “impose ‘further significant’ measures”

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<sup>207</sup> J. H. Ahn, “N. Korean Marshal Ri Ul Sol gets funeral in Pyongyang,” November 12, 2015, <https://www.nknews.org/2015/11/n-korean-marshal-ri-ul-sols-funeral-held-in-pyongyang/> (accessed November 14, 2015). Marshal Ri was the last surviving Manchurian guerrilla.

<sup>208</sup> Cooper, *The Breaking of Nations*, p. 88.

<sup>209</sup> Weber, “The Three Types of Legitimate Rule,” pp. 6-8.

<sup>210</sup> KCNA, “WPK Central Committee Issues Order to Conduct First H-Bomb Test.”

to “impose real consequences” for North Korea’s threatening actions. Others wondered what the international community could do short of war.<sup>211</sup> The North Koreans responded on January 9 by stating the “H-bomb of justice dealt a heavy sledge-hammer at the U.S. and its followers keen to stifle the DPRK and realized the long-cherished desire of the nation to have the most powerful nuclear deterrent.”<sup>212</sup>

It justified the H-bomb by arguing that no other nation has been exposed to U.S. nuclear threats longer than the North Korean people. They cited President Truman’s threat to use the A-bomb in Korea on November 30, 1950, and the fact the U.S. had deployed over a thousand nuclear weapons to South Korea from the 1970s to the early 1990s. It then cited numerous “nuclear war drills against the DPRK in South Korea for several decades under various codenames.” Finally, North Korea argued, “History teaches immutable truth that a small country and the one exposed to the imperialist forces’ direct threat of aggression should exert great efforts for bolstering its military capability than any others.” Since Washington has refused its call for a peace treaty, nuclear weapons “serves as an all-powerful treasured sword” to ensure “peace and security and building a thriving nation.”<sup>213</sup> Seoul responded with loudspeaker broadcasts along the DMZ on 8 January and Pyongyang countered with its own propaganda broadcasts.<sup>214</sup> This does not bode well for North-South relations, especially after the death of Kim Yang-gon on December 29, 2015. He was in charge of the UFD since 2007 and was considered a “pragmatist and skilled

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<sup>211</sup> Karen DeYoung and Anna Fifield, “Global powers condemn North Korea’s nuclear weapons test,” January 6, 2016, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/north-korea-says-it-has-conducted-a-successful-hydrogen-bomb-test/2016/01/06/9add0e52-b436-11e5-a76a-0b5145e8679a\\_story.html?hpid=hp\\_hp-top-table-main\\_nkoreatest-2am%3Ahomepage%2Fstory](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/north-korea-says-it-has-conducted-a-successful-hydrogen-bomb-test/2016/01/06/9add0e52-b436-11e5-a76a-0b5145e8679a_story.html?hpid=hp_hp-top-table-main_nkoreatest-2am%3Ahomepage%2Fstory) (accessed January 9, 2016).

<sup>212</sup> KCNA, “DPRK’s H-bomb Test Is Entirely Just: KCNA Commentary,” January 9, 2016, <http://www.kcnawatch.co/newstream/1452342643-874765354/dprks-h-bomb-test-is-entirely-just-kcna-commentary/> (accessed January 9, 2016).

<sup>213</sup> KCNA, “DPRK’s H-bomb Test Is Entirely Just: KCNA Commentary.”

<sup>214</sup> Leo Byrne, “N. Korea says situation on the ‘brink of war’,” January 10, 2016, <https://www.nknews.org/2016/01/n-korea-says-situation-on-the-brink-of-war/> (accessed January 10, 2016).

bureaucrat” who had “a great deal of influence over inter-Korean policy.”<sup>215</sup> As tensions continue to rise after the nuclear test, review of Kim’s New Year’s speech revealed he was more confident and anxious to demonstrate his leadership. He vowed to “unfold an ambitious blueprint for hastening final victory for our revolution” during the Seventh Party Congress<sup>216</sup> in May 2016.

## 7.6 Summary

First, Kim Jong-un probably knows he cannot become the undisputed Supreme Leader if the only thing going for him is the pure blood inherited from his grandfather or terroristic police control. As discussed, there are indications that after purging about seventy of his core elites, Kim may be easing up on his purges to build unity among the core leadership and this suggests he is more confident about the consolidation of his power. After eliminating immediate threats to his rule, he may be varying his leadership style to co-opt the core elites from the KPA, KWP, and other key institutions. Moreover, Kim must be able to deliver economic success to provide a better life for his people so they are willing to support his regime’s policies as North Korea continues its post-totalitarian transition. In case of failure, Kim could try to find a scapegoat but a better informed populace may not be willing to go on another arduous march if the famine returns. As a result, despite Pyongyang’s demonstrated resilience, Kim has significant challenges ahead at home and abroad.

Second, based on what has occurred during the early years of his rule, some North Korea observers have already decided it is a foregone conclusion that Kim Jong-un is an amateurish and reckless leader who will eventually

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<sup>215</sup> John G. Grisafi, “The legacy of Kim Yang Gon and inter-Korean relations,” January 10, 2016, <https://www.nknews.org/2015/12/the-legacy-of-kim-yang-gon-and-inter-korean-relations/> (accessed January 10, 2016).

<sup>216</sup> KCNA, “Kim Jong Un, first secretary of the Workers’ Party of Korea, first chairman of the National Defence Commission of the DPRK and supreme commander of the Korean People’s Army, made his address on the New Year, Juche 105 (2016),” January 1, 2016, <http://www.kcna.kp/kcna.user.special.getArticlePage.kcmsf> (accessed January 9, 2016). In the speech, Kim stressed improving people’s living conditions is the “most important” of state affairs for the KWP. He also emphasized the need to cultivate the young people as the vanguard of the party, need to strengthen ideology and the KPA, and “Internal Security Forces” eliminating class enemies and hostile forces. Kim also claimed he was prepared to have “open-mined discussions” with Seoul about reunification issues. The Seventh Congress will be in May 2016.

miscalculate and cause the end of the Kim Dynasty. However, the evidence from earlier chapters has shown that this assertion may be premature just as Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il were both underestimated when they rose to power. As discussed, many observers assumed both lacked legitimacy and were incapable of consolidating their power. Nevertheless, they obviously enjoyed a natural death by cultivating effective tools to survive. Kim Jong-un has inherited several of their survival tools and is developing some of his own. For example, he is using his grandfather's anti-Japanese guerrilla legacy to consolidate his power, and his regime is also cultivating more licit sources of revenue and collaborating with Chinese businessmen to survive. It took his father over 20 years to gain the respect and trust of some U.S. policymakers and intelligence analysts, and that suggests it will be a while before Washington will view him as a legitimate negotiating partner, if at all.

Third, the two cases of provocations under his rule suggests he wanted to demonstrate his competence by protecting his regime and justify the North's declaration as a nuclear weapons state by overstating the threat posed by U.S.-South Korean military exercises. On the other hand, it is possible he may have overplayed his hand by deploying his nuclear ICBM and threatening the U.S. homeland. The H-bomb test in January 2016 makes it even more difficult for the U.S. to ignore North Korea's growing nuclear threat. Within the next several years, Washington and its allies must decide how it will deal with the growing nuclear and missile threats from North Korea. It remains to be seen if Kim is making a serious miscalculation by expanding his nuclear weapons and related programs, but it appears that Kim's use of diplomacy and expression of regret after the landmine incident suggests he is more capable than previously imagined. In the end, the evidence suggests Kim Jong-un is slowly demonstrating his leadership ability and is willing to assume some risk to show he is capable of exercising smart power strategies. This suggests it is probably premature to assume North Korea's provocations can be deterred with hard power alone. Next, the study will discuss its findings and offer policy recommendations.

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## CHAPTER 8

### CONCLUSION

*Since its creation in 1948, North Korea has transitioned from pursuing a militant path toward peninsular unification under its own sovereignty, most notably epitomized by its attack on South Korea in 1950, to one of belligerent survival, characterized by trying to wrest economic and political concessions from other nations through threats and aggressive behavior.<sup>1</sup>*

- Jacques Fuqua

#### 8.1 Introduction

As stated in the Introduction, this study has sought to explain how North Korea continues to survive. The question posed at the start was whether Nye's concept of smart power offers an alternative explanation for North Korea's resilience. Hence, the methodology of this unique study was to conduct a multi-case study from the Korean War to August 2015 to examine over a dozen cases during the reigns of the three Kims and examined the relevance of their survival tools. In fact, other than a few studies that have outlined the chronology of provocations, this is the first study that has examined North Korean provocations in depth from its origin to 2015. After examining their survival tools, the study applied Nye's smart power theory to consider an alternative and more plausible explanation for the resilience of the Kim regime. It is my contention that based on the analysis undertaken in the preceding chapters it is possible to answer the five smart power questions, and the findings suggest the application of smart power theory has more utility than other explanations of North Korean survival. Nye's theory accommodates not just the temporal context but also how limited national power resources of an authoritarian regime can be used effectively to achieve desired outcomes. While it is true North Korea's strategic aim shifted from reunification to survival, coercive diplomacy was not the only way for North Korea to survive.

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<sup>1</sup> Prescott, *East Asia in the World*, p. 195.

As discussed in Chapter 1, observers should not assume North Korea's rogue status means it is incapable of employing "a calculated employment of force and statecraft for a political end."<sup>2</sup> Moreover, one should not dismiss the possibility that North Korea could have exercised smart power to achieve its aims by arguing it has no soft power attributes. This might result if one misinterprets "soft power as a synonym for culture and then go on to downgrade its importance."<sup>3</sup> The evidence suggests the North did have soft power attributes. Its leaders during the early years of the regime used benignity to attract others but consistently have used competence and persuasion to exercise soft power. It remains to be seen whether Kim Jong-un will be successful, but resolving the upcoming nuclear ICBM crisis with Washington could be his litmus test. That being said, before I review the Kims' use of smart power, I will briefly summarize the findings from my examination of the following questions regarding the regime's survival tools: (1) How relevant is Kim Il-sung's guerrilla experience? (2) Was Kim Jong-il capable of maintaining totalitarianism despite relative weakness? (3) What did the Kims learn from North Korea's economic failure following the Soviet collapse? (4) How critical is ideology to overcoming the regime's weakness and promoting unity? (5) Will nuclear weapons strengthen the regime or make it more vulnerable to external pressure? (6) Is North Korea exploiting China to strengthen its economy or is it dependent on China for survival? (7) Can North Korea under Kim Jong-un counter calls for a "North Korean spring" with its own ideas?

## **8.2 Analysis of North Korea's Survival Tools**

First, the Japanese colonial legacy still looms large in Korean society, and Pyongyang continues to promote Kim Il-sung's anti-Japanese struggle in Manchuria to wage its war of legitimacy with Seoul. In order to facilitate the first succession, North Korea manufactured Kim Jong-il's ties to his father's guerrilla legacy to convey the message that those who fought the Japanese had the

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<sup>2</sup> Peter Paret, ed., *Makers of Modern Strategy from Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), p. 871.

<sup>3</sup> Nye, *The Future of Power*, pp. 22-23.



purest nationalist credentials. This story attempted to tie both father and son to the anti-Japanese guerrilla tradition of the North Korean revolution and reinforced the heroic bloodline of the Kim family. When he assumed power during the famine years, Kim Jong-il manipulated his father's guerrilla legacy to justify the arduous march, and his own son even turned back time in August 2015 to celebrate the regime's anti-Japanese legacy. As Cheong Sung-hwa noted in Chapter 4, one of the few "common denominators of politics in postwar Korea" is its shared hatred of Japan, and this remains one of the most important tools for the Kim regime's legitimacy, national identity, and unity.

Second, North Korean society continues to evolve as marketization from below expands and outside information continues to penetrate its borders. The success of Kim Jong-un's *Byungjin* policy could mitigate or retard the negative impact of social change on the regime, but regaining near monopoly control of information and the economy will be difficult without risking social unrest. Therefore, North Korean society continues to evolve and it will be difficult for Kim to reverse the post-totalitarian trends in the country. In fact, long-term social change could pose a significant challenge for Kim's survival. It could weaken the regime's ideology, its social hierarchy based on *Songbun*, and its central control of the periphery. This will be one of the survival challenges for Kim.

Third, despite some indications that North Korea was considering economic reforms, as noted in Chapter 2, Kim Jong-il never implemented them because he realized from the Soviet experience that economic reforms could threaten the survival of the regime. He relied on foreign aid and illicit activities for a while but they are no longer effective tools of survival. The reality is that most aid providers are no longer willing to give aid to Pyongyang unless it demonstrates a willingness to abandon its nuclear weapons and halts its cycle of provocations. As long as Pyongyang refuses to change its provocative behavior, the U.S.-led international community will continue to expand its sanctions regime. It remains to be seen if Kim Jong-un will be the first to implement significant economic reforms to keep his promise that North Koreans

will no longer have to tighten their belts. As shown in Chapter 7, there is some evidence that he is serious about attracting foreign investment and expanding foreign trade, but he has yet to officially embrace economic reforms. How to deliver (slow) economic growth will be another survival challenge for Kim.

Fourth, *Juche* ideology probably still resonates with many older North Koreans because this generation understands the regime's call for national autonomy and self-determination as a former Japanese colony and a tributary state of China. As discussed in the previous chapter, the younger generation may be less susceptible to propaganda glorifying the *Juche* idea due to its growing exposure to market forces and outside information. In spite of these challenges, the regime continues to promote its ideology through education and propaganda, and it remains to be seen whether *Juche* will lose its relevance as the new generation continues its rise as the system evolves. Kim's ability to control the younger generation is yet another survival challenge for Kim.

Fifth, Kim Il-sung likely learned during the Korean War that nuclear weapons could be used as a coercive instrument of power. As a result, he probably started the nuclear program in the late 1950s with the goal of possessing a nuclear deterrent during his rule. However, it was Kim Jong-il who succeeded in acquiring nuclear weapons and related programs (e.g., ICBMs). These capabilities may have arguably deterred outside intervention but one could also claim that North Korea's conventional weapons and the costly legacy of the Korean War have been just as effective as deterrents against external interference. Moreover, if Pyongyang miscalculates by fully operationalizing its nuclear ICBMs to threaten the U.S. homeland, that may lead to U.S. intervention, instead of deterring it. In spite of this, Kim Jong-un risked escalation by ordering an H-bomb test in January 2016 to bolster his legitimacy.

Sixth, it is clear that Kim Il-sung aptly played the Chinese-Soviet rivalry during the Cold War to gain maximum concessions from both sides. However, while many observers believed North Korea was overly dependent on the Soviet Union, they were wrong in predicting the downfall of North Korea when the collapse of the Soviet Union brought Soviet aid to an end. In recent years,

one cannot ignore the fact that North Korea became more reliant on China, especially after 2008 when a more conservative government in Seoul demanded reciprocity on denuclearization in exchange for economic largesse. Nonetheless, it may be premature to definitively conclude Pyongyang will collapse without Chinese support because Beijing thus far has lacked the political will to cut off its aid. In fact, it is just as convincing to argue Beijing is held hostage to prop up the Kim regime because China is more worried about a mass exodus of North Korean refugees than attempting to control Pyongyang's provocative behavior, including the expansion of its nuclear and missile programs. In addition, Pyongyang is aware of its growing dependency on China and is actively seeking alternative sources for trade and investment such as Russia to hedge against future Chinese coercion. Finally, under Kim Jong-un, North Korea has greatly expanded its ability to earn foreign currency, especially its licit sources of revenue.

Finally, the growing interaction and dependence on outsiders, coupled with the penetration of information from the outside, could weaken the national narrative of the *Juche* idea that portrays North Korea as an "autonomous, independent, and self-reliant" nation.<sup>4</sup> However, evidence suggests North Korea is taking some measures to reduce its dependence on China, and Kim has embraced *Byungjin* and *Songun* policies to legitimize his rule. His long-term success is likely to depend on increased foreign trade and investments with non-traditional partners in the international community. Kim also has abundant mineral resources, a niche market in conventional weapons, the export of cheap labor, and a growing tourism industry that could sustain gradual economic growth. More importantly, despite the spread of information from the outside, North Korea still maintains a police state to suppress an uprising.

In sum, the findings from this study of North Korea's survival tools suggest some of the tools have not been handed down to Kim Jong-un as the international and domestic situation has evolved over time, but the most

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<sup>4</sup> Robinson, *Korea's Twentieth-Century Odyssey*, p. 159.

enduring survival tools Kim Jong-un inherited came from both Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il. This realization also reveals North Korea's grand strategy. Nye defined it as the country's "leaders' theory and story about how to provide for its security, welfare, and identity," but in order for the grand strategy to work it "has to be adjusted for changes in context."<sup>5</sup> Hence, one could argue North Korea's grand strategy is founded on its anti-imperialist legacy, *Juche* ideology, and the possession of nuclear weapons. Kim Jong-il adjusted for the changes that occurred after his father's death by promoting his *Songun* policy but contributed to North Korea's grand strategy by finally producing nuclear weapons. It appears that Kim Jong-un's contribution will be to enhance the nuclear deterrent by acquiring nuclear ICBMs and the H-bomb, and his policy adjustment is to embrace his grandfather's *Byungjin* policy. The question is whether he can also deliver economic growth to satisfy the demands of his people. Next, the study's findings indicate Nye's smart power framework can be used as an analytical tool to examine how North Korea survives.

### 8.3 Analysis of the Kims' Use of Smart Power

In brief, evidence using Nye's theory as a hypothesis suggests all three Kims attempted to use smart power strategies but Kim Jong-il was the most successful in its execution. Kim Il-sung's smart power attempts largely fell short (with the exception of the Pueblo incident) because he ultimately failed to achieve his goal of reunification. Many of his failed attempts can be attributed to his hubris as he misread South Korean protests and popular rebellions against their authoritarian governments as widespread endorsement of his regime. On the other hand, Kim Jong-il appears to have learned much during his grooming period (mostly from his mistakes) and, despite being dealt a bad hand in the early 1990s, he defied predictions that he would not survive very long after his father's death. Although reunification became an aspirational goal during his rule, Kim Jong-il aptly used smart power to survive and often engaged personally to achieve his aims. Regardless of the contrast in their

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<sup>5</sup>Nye, *The Future of Power*, p. 212.

ability to exercise smart power, the first two Kims utilized a situational leadership style that was flexible enough to adapt to “the demands of different situations.”<sup>6</sup> However, after Kim Jong-un purged about 70 high-level officials since assuming power, he has earned his reputation for a hyper-directive style of leadership (i.e., terroristic control). Nevertheless, there are some indications he could be easing up as he completes his consolidation of power and has shown he is more rational than initially anticipated by many observers. Before I examine the policy implications, I analyze the Kims’ use of smart power by presenting the answers to four of the five smart power questions in separate columns of the following tables, and presenting the answer to question 5 (noted in italics) as appropriate within the columns related to forms of power behaviors. The intent is not to prove scientifically the application of Nye’s smart power with the tables, but to demonstrate their potential as an analytical tool to support abductive research strategies.

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<sup>6</sup> Northouse, *Leadership*, 7th ed., p. 93.

Table 8.1: Analyses of North Korea's Use of Smart Power under Kim Il-sung					
Analyses Cases (Hard Power)	Year	North Korea's Power Resources	Probability of Success (Rationality)	Use of Soft Power	Use of Smart Power
Korean War	1950	By June 1950, the U.S. believed KPA and South Korean Army were roughly equal in strength. However, many in the KPA had been battle-tested before the war and the KPA possessed significant military capabilities. Unlike the South, the KPA had over 210 fighter aircraft, close to 200 tanks, and 180 self-propelled artillery guns.	<b>High probability of success.</b> Kim was convinced he could successfully achieve reunification within a month due to his combat power advantage and the (wrong) assumption that large numbers of Southern guerrillas would directly support his invasion. He almost succeeded even with the U.S.-led UNC intervention.	<b>Yes.</b> Mao and Stalin initially opposed Kim's proposal to invade South Korea, but eventually he persuaded them to support the invasion. When Kim failed to reunify the country, Mao saved him.	<b>No.</b> U.S. won the dispute over non-forcible return of POWs. Kim also failed to achieve reunification but used the war to consolidate his power and reinforced his revolutionary credentials.
Commando Raid on the Blue House	1968	31 North Korean commandos infiltrated through the DMZ to assassinate South Korean President Park Chung-hee.	<b>Good prospect of success.</b> This mission might have succeeded had the commandos chosen to kill the "four woodcutters" who ran into them in the woods during their infiltration. They let them go and the police were placed on alert. There was a possibility that China may have supported Kim had he escalated.	<b>No.</b> Kim offered an apology in May 1972 to Lee Hu-rak for the raid during a secret meeting in Pyongyang. However, it was not part of the initial plan to de-escalate.	<b>No.</b> Kim assumed he could incite a pro-North Korean revolution in the South by killing Park Chung-hee. However, the raid failed and mobilized South Koreans behind Park Chung-hee.
Capture of USS Pueblo	1968	KPA's small contingent of air force and navy assets included two patrol craft, four fast attack torpedo craft, and two MIG-21 fighters.	<b>High probability of success.</b> The element of surprise and the apparent vulnerability of the Pueblo to a North Korean attack probably emboldened Kim. U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War also was a factor.	<b>Yes.</b> Despite the failed raid on the Blue House, North Korea bridled South Korean desire for retaliation by capturing the USS Pueblo and manipulated the incident to its advantage by arguing the U.S. had violated its sovereignty.	<b>Yes.</b> North Korea managed to gain a U.S. apology and establish its international revolutionary credentials and improved relations with Beijing.

<b>Ulchin-Samchok Raid</b>	<b>1968</b>	Approximately 120 Special Forces troops were deployed to the east coast of South Korea near the villages of Ulchin and Samchok to establish a base for guerrilla operations.	<b>High probability of success.</b> Kim believed he had created a socialist paradise in the North and, if properly indoctrinated, South Koreans would choose North Korea over the South. The fact the commandos let the four woodcutters go suggests they viewed them as fellow Koreans, not the enemy.	<b>No.</b> <i>Kim misunderstood South Korean desire for democracy (e.g., protests against Park) as support for the North Korean regime.</i>	<b>No.</b> North Korea failed to establish a base for an insurgency in South Korea. Instead, it validated a counter-infiltration plan of the U.S.-South Korea alliance.
<b>Panmunjom Ax Murders</b>	<b>1976</b>	KPA initially had a dozen soldiers on-site, but when the conversation between the two sides became contentious 20 more KPA soldiers arrived before they assaulted the UNC soldiers.	<b>Good prospect of success.</b> Zhou En-lai may have convinced North Korea that a U.S. loss in Vietnam would force it to withdraw from Korea. This was probably intended as a low-risk affair but the situation quickly escalated when the KPA soldiers in the JSA killed two U.S. Army officers.	<b>Yes.</b> <i>Kim underestimated U.S. resolve after the loss in Vietnam and did not interfere with U.S. tree clearing operation after the ax murders. Kim personally apologized to persuade the Commander UNC it was genuine and to quickly de-escalate the situation.</i>	<b>No.</b> Kim failed to mobilize support for U.S. troop withdrawal from South Korea.
<b>Rangoon Bombing</b>	<b>1983</b>	North dispatched a three-man commando team to kill Chun Doo-hwan with a powerful bomb after a merchant ship facilitated reconnaissance of the objective about a month before the bombing.	<b>Good prospect of success.</b> Kim had reason to believe the operation would be a success due to its careful planning, but the mission failed because Chun's motorcade was delayed, only by chance. However, the Trilateral Talks proposal may have been an attempt to hedge after the mission.	<b>No.</b> <i>Again, Kim misunderstood South Korean desire for democracy (protests against Chun before and after the Kwangju Massacre) as another opportunity for reunification.</i>	<b>No.</b> The mission failed and helped to legitimize Chun's rule, and North Korea began to garner a reputation as a state sponsor of terrorism.
<b>Bombing of KAL Flight 858</b>	<b>1987</b>	Kim Jong-il sent two covert agents to the Middle East to blow up a South Korean airliner. They received support from two North Korean agents at the airport.	<b>Little or no prospect of success.</b> The experienced agent knew there were serious problems with mission planning. It was a desperate attempt to destabilize the South but it took too long for the investigation and South Korea could not retaliate.	<b>No.</b> <i>The South was finally ready to become a legitimate democracy as Chun Doo-hwan was prepared to step down peacefully.</i>	<b>No.</b> North Korea was designated as a state sponsor of terrorism after the bombing. The two agents were ordered to kill over 100 innocent South Korean workers.

As shown above in Table 8.1, the review of the multi-case study under Kim Il-sung indicates he failed to achieve his primary aim of reunification, and what this implies is that survival was not in question until the early 1990s. Kim was convinced that if the South Koreans had a choice they would choose his socialist system over the authoritarian dictatorships in the South. As a result, when he observed popular protests and rebellions in South Korea from the late 1940s to the 1980s, he always viewed them through this hubristic lens as an opportunity to reunify the country. However, these were arguably rational choices as he attempted to use these provocations to reunify the country. In most cases, he probably assessed the likelihood of success as good to high. The one exception was the bombing of KAL 858 when it was clear that the plan was likely to fail. By 1987, Kim probably knew unification was a pipe dream as his son resorted to terrorism against South Korean workers before the Olympics.

Nevertheless, Kim Il-sung attempted to use smart power during the Korean War, the capture of the USS Pueblo, and the ax murders at Panmunjom. In fact, in 1968 Kim was able to turn the failed raid on the Blue House into a success by arguing he had defended the North's sovereignty by capturing the USS Pueblo and its crew. Arguably, he may also have succeeded in promoting his revolutionary credentials by confronting the U.S. while it was at war in Vietnam. In the remaining cases (i.e., Blue House raid, Ulchin-Samchok raid, Rangoon bombing, and KAL 858 bombing), Kim (and his son) relied only on hard power and they all failed to achieve desired outcomes. Most importantly, the non-forcible return of POWs during the Korean War and the Panmunjom incident demonstrated that the U.S. could influence North Korean behavior with determination and willingness to risk war. In the end, Kim's competence and charismatic leadership, which brought relative security and stability to North Korea (in spite of provocations) after the Korean War, allowed him to bask in the knowledge that most of his people admired him as the Supreme Leader. He also had a fallback plan to groom Kim Jong-il for over twenty years and, when Beijing and Moscow abandoned him in 1992, he used the nuclear card to ensure survival.



**Table 8.2: Analyses of North Korea's Use of Smart Power under Kim Jong-il**

Analyses Cases (Hard Power)					
	Year	North Korea's Power Resources	Probability of Success (Rationality)	Use of Soft Power	Use of Smart Power
<b>North Korean Nuclear Weapons Development</b>	<b>1994</b>	Kim Jong-il and Vice Marshal Jo Myong-rak engaged the U.S. at the highest levels. Their efforts were complemented by skilled negotiators from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs who used the hardline of the KPA and KWP to influence senior U.S. officials, negotiators, and some in the IC.	<b>High probability of success.</b> Once President Carter intervened to defuse the crisis, North Koreans probably realized that, as long as they were willing to address Washington's concerns about its nascent nuclear program, a deal could be made with the U.S.	<b>Yes.</b> North Korean negotiators manipulated and persuaded U.S. negotiators that Kim Jong-il was serious about nuclear negotiations despite KPA and KWP opposition. In fact, the Clinton administration was convinced Kim could be a trusted partner.	<b>Yes.</b> <i>The U.S. seriously considered use of force against the North; however, it eventually chose to negotiate.</i> The concessions that Kim Jong-il received as a result of the 1994 Agreed Framework were critical in North Korea's survival strategy during the famine years.
<b>Second Nuclear Crisis</b>	<b>2002</b>	Kim Jong-il directly engaged with leaders of South Korea and Japan to promote his aims. At the same time, the North Koreans exerted pressure on the U.S. by conducting a nuclear test and missile launches. They also leveraged select groups of U.S. interlocutors, both official and unofficial, to elicit nuclear negotiations or convey nuclear threats. The North Koreans used their experienced diplomats to negotiate nuclear deals and monitor the course of their implementation to protect their aim of survival.	<b>Uncertainty of success with U.S. but high probability with Seoul/Tokyo.</b> North Korea probably believed Bush sought regime change, and the U.S. invasion of Iraq forced Pyongyang to attempt various forms of coercion and persuasion to seek bilateral negotiations. When the U.S. war in Iraq began to falter and Bush appointed Chris Hill to negotiate with Pyongyang, the North likely sensed probability of success was increasing. Kim sensed he had little difficulty with the South Koreans and the Japanese but misjudged the latter's reaction to the abductions.	<b>Yes.</b> <i>Bush preferred regime change;</i> however, North Korea was able to manipulate and persuade some in Washington to pursue diplomacy. This eventually convinced Bush to overlook Pyongyang's illicit (e.g., BDA) and nuclear proliferation activities.	<b>Yes.</b> The September 2005 Joint Statement also helped Kim to resist Bush's hardline policy and survive the growing international sanctions regime against Pyongyang.

<b>North Korean Sinking of the Cheonan</b>	<b>2010</b>	North Korea used a submarine from the RGB to conduct its covert action to sink the Cheonan and deployed conventional artillery to conduct a limited artillery attack on Yeonpyeong Island.	<b>High probability of success.</b> Kim correctly assessed that using covert assets would improve his likelihood of success. He used his strengths of surprise and underwater warfare to defeat a much more capable South Korean surface navy. The investigation also took too long for South Korean retaliation.	<b>Yes.</b> Kim used covert action, which <i>made it difficult for South Korea and the U.S. to conclusively argue North Korea was responsible for the Cheonan sinking.</i> As a result, Beijing and Moscow supported him, and the majority of South Koreans were manipulated to believe the North was not responsible.	<b>Yes.</b> Kim Jong-il was able to avenge the losses from the November 2009 naval clash and successfully challenged Seoul's hardline policy against the North.
<b>Shelling of Yeonpyeong Island</b>	<b>2010</b>	Three batteries of multiple rocket launchers fired about 170 rounds toward the island.	<b>High probability of success.</b> KPA had the advantage of surprise and preparedness. Kim argued he warned Seoul he would defend North Korea's sovereignty. He probably was ready to apologize to de-escalate.	<b>Yes.</b> Kim attempted to manipulate the incident by claiming the North was protecting its territorial sovereignty but offered a half-hearted apology for those killed during the attack to show credibility of his claims. <i>The South retaliated but was largely ineffective.</i>	<b>Yes.</b> Kim used the artillery attack to bolster his son as his successor, defender of North Korea's sovereignty, and a master military strategist.

When Kim Jong-il assumed power he faced a constellation of forces that threatened the survival of his regime. Unlike his father, Kim became more pragmatic and understood that reunification was no longer a realistic aim, focusing instead on regime survival. He successfully used smart power to resolve the nuclear issue with Presidents Clinton and Bush to deter U.S. military action, legitimize his rule, and obtain some of the resources he needed to survive from the mid-1990s to 2008. Although many have argued Kim's strategy was purely coercive, the evidence suggests he used smart power to convince two U.S. presidents to seek a negotiated settlement. With the Clinton administration, Kim used the KPA and the KWP to threaten nuclear breakout and as leverage to gain the upper hand during negotiations. He also employed high-level diplomacy to demonstrate his competence to build trust with Clinton.

On the other hand, Kim reached out to the Bush administration by engaging both official and unofficial U.S. contacts, but they initially failed. However, when the Iraq War faltered, Bush was more open to negotiations. Having said that, the U.S. hardliners continued to apply pressure by declaring BDA a primary money laundering concern. After North Korea conducted its first nuclear test in 2006 and launched more missiles, the BDA issue was resolved. Kim was successful despite crossing Bush's redline on nuclear proliferation because he was pragmatic and took significant steps to dismantle his plutonium program. Yet, Kim hedged by denying the existence of his HEU program.

Kim also seized the moment to engage Seoul's progressive governments from 1998 to 2008. He used benignity to attract benefits and offered a more positive perception of North Korea in the South by personally engaging in the reconciliation process. When North-South reconciliation was reversed after Lee Myung-bak assumed power in 2008, Kim resorted to carefully planned provocations to retaliate against Lee's hardline policy and to support the leadership succession of his son. When he attacked Yeonpyeong, Kim invoked defense of sovereignty claim and offered a quasi-apology. With the exception of the Bush gambit, Kim probably felt the probability of success was high for the other cases and finally convinced Obama to negotiate a deal before his death.

**Table 8.3: Analyses of North Korea's Use of Smart Power under Kim Jong-un**

Analyses  Cases (Hard Power)	Year	North Korea's Power Resources	Probability of Success (Rationality)	Use of Soft Power	Use of Smart Power
<b>Deployment of Long-Range Missiles to Strike the U.S.</b>	<b>2013</b>	Kim reportedly ordered the missile deployment as a demonstration of power to declare he had a nuclear ICBM capability to defend the country. The escalation during the provocation was largely caused by the intense propaganda from the regime that expressed its intent to preemptively strike the U.S. homeland with nuclear ICBMs.	<b>High probability of success.</b> North Koreans were probably convinced they could control the escalation ladder as long as they refrained from launching the missile. If all else failed, the exit strategy was to employ high-level diplomacy and use the KIC as leverage to return to the status quo.	<b>Yes.</b> U.S. reassured South Korea by deploying bombers and missile defense forces, and called on China to pressure the North. In spite of the rhetoric and the reported deployment of a nuclear ICBM, Kim Jong-un manipulated international sanctions and military exercises in South Korea to demonstrate his competence and leadership. He de-escalated the situation by sending Cho Ryong-hae to Beijing and reopening the KIC.	<b>Yes.</b> Kim Jong-un used Exercise KEY RESOLVE and the overt deployment of B-52 and B-2 bombers to justify North Korea's status as a nuclear weapons state in April 2013. He also reaffirmed his own adaptation of Kim Il-sung's <i>Byungjin</i> line (simultaneous development of economy and nuclear weapons).
<b>Landmine Incident in the DMZ</b>	<b>2015</b>	KPA probably used light infantry to emplace the landmines and employed tactical artillery near the DMZ to heighten tensions. Kim also used diplomacy to de-escalate the situation. The North effectively used its media to signal threats, desire for engagement, and provide the rationale for policy positions such as <i>Juche</i> , <i>Songun</i> , <i>Byungjin</i> , nuclear weapons, and the civilian space program.	<b>High probability of success.</b> The covert use of landmines was at the lower end of the conflict spectrum, and it would be difficult to prove conclusively North Korea was responsible.	<b>Yes.</b> South Korea responded to the incident by ordering its troops to prepare for war, resuming loudspeaker broadcasts, and return artillery fires. Kim manipulated the 70 <sup>th</sup> anniversary of Korean liberation to demonstrate his leadership and quickly de-escalated by initiating high-level talks and offering an expression of regret.	<b>Yes.</b> Kim was perceived by some as a more rational and capable leader than previously assessed based on his pragmatic choices during the incident. The North also made the point its leadership had more legitimacy to rule all of Korea. It also cited military exercises in the South to defend its nuclear and missile programs.

As Kim Jong-un began to consolidate his power in 2012, North Korea conducted a space launch in April even though the U.S. claimed space launches were in violation of the February 2012 nuclear agreement because it viewed them as long-range missile tests. After claiming its sovereign right to conduct space launches, the North followed up in December with a successful space launch and a third nuclear test in February 2013. Pyongyang then boasted it had successfully tested a miniature nuclear device. In other words, North Korea claimed it possessed a nuclear ICBM. The North Koreans did not have to wait long before they would try to demonstrate this capability. The combined U.S.-South Korean military exercises in March 2013 as well as the first overt B-52 and B-2 bomber flights over Korea were manipulated to justify Pyongyang's declaration as a nuclear weapons state in April 2013. Subsequently, Kim ordered the deployment of a nuclear ICBM to the east coast. The evidence suggests North Korea probably believed the likelihood of success was high because, after demonstrating it had a nuclear ICBM capability, it refrained from launching the missile and was prepared to de-escalate by sending a senior official to Beijing and re-opening the KIC.

The second provocation in August 2015 was more of a surprise to many observers. Although some in South Korea claimed this incident was a case of miscalculation on Kim's part, it appears that it was a well-planned provocation manufactured to manipulate North Korea's legitimacy over the Park Geun-hye administration in Seoul. As the Koreans prepared to celebrate the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of their liberation from Japanese colonial rule, Kim probably realized this was a unique opportunity to differentiate the backgrounds of the ruling families of the two Koreas and to tout the North's nuclear weapons. His family descended from anti-Japanese guerrilla fighters while Park's father was an officer in the Japanese Army who fought for the enemy. For Kim, it was the perfect time to wage the war of legitimacy and he even turned back the clock to prove it. Kim also used the opportunity to demonstrate his competent leadership, and evidence suggests some observers are convinced he is more capable a leader than previously imagined.

Moreover, the probability of success was high because there was no conclusive evidence the North Koreans had planted the landmines. Like his forefathers, he was prepared to offer regrets to de-escalate – the issuance of a quasi-apology has been a regular tactic of the Kims. The H-bomb test in January 2016 sets the tone for Kim Jong-un to celebrate the success of his *Byungjin* policy during the fifth year of his rule.

#### **8.4 Conclusion and Recommendations**

As shown above, the review of the multi-case study suggests that only when the Kims carefully orchestrated the use of hard and soft power did they achieve their aims. If Nye is correct in saying, “One has to know about a country’s skill at power conversion as well as its possession of power resources to predict outcomes correctly,”<sup>1</sup> then the evidence suggests the North Koreans have proven that they are capable of converting their relatively meager power resources to achieve desired outcomes, especially since the early 1990s. As shown in Chapter 5, North Korea has been smart enough not to directly challenge the U.S. with conventional force since the Panmunjom ax murders (unless its sovereignty is violated), but as with other weak states it intends to “deter the U.S. by making it more costly” for Washington to use its hard power.<sup>2</sup> From this perspective, North Korea has been highly successful and it bodes well for Kim Jong-un’s survival despite some challenges. The question is what does the application of smart power theory suggest for a U.S. smart power strategy to resolve the North Korea problem? Before answering this question, it is appropriate to provide additional context by examining a recent study forecasting the future of North Korea.

In 2014 Kim Sung-han of Korea University conducted a survey of 135 North Korea experts and security specialists from the five non-North Korea 6PT countries

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<sup>1</sup> Nye, *Bound To Lead*, p. 27.

<sup>2</sup> Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2004), p. 26.

and Europe. According to his survey, about 48% of all respondents believed Kim Jong-un would be able to consolidate his power in the near future (3 to 5 years), instead of experiencing instability or collapse. When looking out five to ten years (mid-term), slightly over 40% of the respondents from South Korea predicted that the Kim regime would collapse, and about 37% of all other respondents from outside Korea concurred with this assessment. As the survey looked long-term (10 to 20 years), only about a third of all respondents believed Kim could survive that long.<sup>3</sup>

As for the question of how the regime would collapse, about 65% of all respondents believed that the main cause would be “a power struggle within the leadership.” The next likely reason according to 27% of respondents was economic failure. However, almost all of the respondents were cautious about “civil society emerging in North Korea,” as only 3% believed a popular uprising would end the regime.<sup>4</sup> With respect to North Korea’s nuclear program, nearly all of them (95.6%) were convinced that Pyongyang would never abandon it, but 56% of U.S. participants in the survey believed pressure from China is the key to resolving the nuclear issue while about 37% of non-U.S. respondents believed that was the case. Surprisingly, *no* Chinese respondent believed pressure from Beijing was the answer to solving the crisis, and 42% of the Chinese called for resumption of 6PT and promoted U.S.-North Korea talks.<sup>5</sup> That said, what does the application of smart power suggest is the most likely future for North Korea?

The analysis of North Korea’s use of smart power indicates Kim Jong-un’s regime is likely to be just as resilient and could survive over the long term as he consolidates power. The study also indicates that Armstrong is correct to suggest that there is a stable state of permanent crisis in North Korea that promotes a siege

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<sup>3</sup> Kim, “The Future of North Korea.”

<sup>4</sup> Kim, “The Future of North Korea.”

<sup>5</sup> Kim, “The Future of North Korea.”

mentality<sup>6</sup> which justifies North Korea's grand strategy. Thus, from the Kims' perspective, they have been mostly rational in pursuing their provocations and they have also been very good at controlling escalation. As shown, Kim Jong-un has proven to some observers that he is more rational and savvy than before, but his next major foreign policy test in the near future is likely to be the U.S.-led international reaction to his expansion of nuclear weapons and missile capabilities. The findings of this study indicate Kim and his core elites are probably preparing to meet that challenge if and when it comes. However, it may be more difficult for them to manage the long-term challenge of social change posed by the regime's post-totalitarian transition. Kim will have to demonstrate his competence and his leadership skills, both at home and abroad, if they are to succeed. These developments offer challenges as well as opportunities if Washington were to consider a smart power strategy of its own to address the North Korea problem.

First, it starts with identifying what the desired outcome is vis-à-vis North Korea? Is it to force regime change or induce change in the regime's behavior? If it is the former, it is unlikely to work without risking full-scale war in Korea. President Bush attempted to seek regime change but in reality he pursued negotiations during his second term despite significant opposition from hardliners in his administration. As President Eisenhower concluded during the Korean War, use of armed force to achieve Korean reunification (i.e., regime change) is a "pipe dream." This lesson from the Korean War continues to strike a chord with U.S. policymakers. As General Gary Luck cautioned in the mid-1990s, a conflict "over North Korea's nuclear program would amount to 1 million casualties and \$1 trillion in estimated industrial damage and lost business."<sup>7</sup> In addition, as Nye noted, the Iraqi WMD failure and the perceived politicization of U.S. intelligence "will have a permanent damaging effect on the credibility of the American government when it

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<sup>6</sup> Armstrong, "Ideological Introversion and Regime Survival," p. 225.

<sup>7</sup> Moore, ed., *North Korean Nuclear Operationality*, p. 150.



approaches other countries for help on cases like Iran and North Korea.”<sup>8</sup> It is plausible that this may have been a factor when the Chinese and Russians failed to support the multilateral findings against North Korea after the Cheonan sinking. That being the case, force should be used as a last resort, but what should be the aims to change North Korea’s behavior?

The first priority is to stop North Korea’s development of a reliable, nuclear-armed ICBM. Although North Korea claims it possesses a miniaturized warhead already, it has yet to develop “a proven nuclear ICBM capability and a warhead that could survive re-entry.”<sup>9</sup> The U.S. must do all it can to prevent North Korea from achieving this aim. This begs the question whether North Korea’s possession of nuclear weapons is tolerable in the near term as long as it does not proliferate and is willing to cap its nuclear and related programs. In other words, if North Korea agrees to freeze its nuclear and missile programs in exchange for security guarantees, economic benefits, or cancellation of military exercises, is it acceptable as the first step toward denuclearization? If so, it is time to re-engage Pyongyang before it acquires a survivable nuclear deterrent. If not, the U.S. could continue with even tougher sanctions, but the evidence so far suggests sanctions alone are unlikely to result in denuclearization. The U.S. must find another way to eliminate North Korea’s nuclear and missile programs. A more realistic option is to cap or freeze Pyongyang’s nuclear programs as soon as possible and resume implementation of the September 2005 agreement. It committed North Korea to abandon “all nuclear programs in return for [U.S.] security guarantees, economic and energy assistance, and a willingness to proceed with a peace treaty.”<sup>10</sup>

The second priority is to ensure it stops proliferating nuclear materials, technology, or weapons. Undeniably, the U.S. chose to ignore Pyongyang’s

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<sup>8</sup> Nye, *Soft Power*, p. 29.

<sup>9</sup> Steve Almasy and Euan McKirdy, “North Korea claims to have nuclear warheads that can fit on missiles,” CNN, March 10, 2016, <http://www.cnn.com/2016/03/08/asia/north-korea-nuclear-warheads/> (accessed March 19, 2016).

<sup>10</sup> Hill, “The Elusive Vision of a Non-nuclear North Korea,” p. 12.

nuclear proliferation to Syria in 2007, but if it is serious about counterproliferation the U.S. must make it clear to Kim this is a survival issue for Washington, especially if Pyongyang sells its nuclear weapons to the highest bidder. Having said that, Graham Allison has argued the more likely place where terrorists could acquire a nuclear weapon is Pakistan. He also predicted there was a “better-than-even” chance that there would be a nuclear attack on the U.S. by 2014, but he was wrong. Michael Levi cautioned that, while some terrorist groups may have aspirations to “blow up Manhattan,” the likelihood of success is important to their calculus since failure would expose the group “and invite unwanted attention from the United States and other governments.”<sup>11</sup> If and when the North sold its nuclear weapons to a terrorist group, it would be the end of the regime. After the 2007 case with Syria, there is always the possibility of miscalculation, but the evidence suggests the North Koreans are not suicidal and this is an unlikely outcome.

The third priority is to deal with local provocations. As discussed in Chapter 6, Seoul has taken significant steps to counter provocations near the NLL and to defend the Northwest Islands. It has also worked closely with Washington to develop a combined operational plan to counter the North’s provocations,<sup>12</sup> and has recently demonstrated its willingness to resume psychological operations along the DMZ.<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, these developments will not deter North Korean provocation, as we have seen in this study. What is more likely to deter provocations is long-term engagement. As Victor Cha noted, “Over three decades [1984-2012], there has only been one instance in which DPRK provocations took place during ongoing negotiations (August 31, 1998, missile test).” While the end of negotiations is expected to result in more provocations, “dialogue does appear to help prevent crisis and escalation.”<sup>14</sup> In other words, it is better to have patience

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<sup>11</sup> Nate Silver, *The Signal and the Noise: Why So Many Predictions Fail – but Some Don’t* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2012), pp. 434-444.

<sup>12</sup> Bechtol, *The Last Days of Kim Jong-Il*, p. 84.

<sup>13</sup> Cha, “The Aftermath of the Cheonan.”

<sup>14</sup> Cha, *The Impossible State*, p. 237 and pp. 457-458.

while restoring stability and attempting to dismantle North Korea's nuclear programs rather than waiting for sanctions to work as Pyongyang builds a survivable nuclear deterrent.

Finally, it is a priority of the international community to address North Korea's human rights violations. As noted in Chapter 6, in late 2004 Bush promoted the "North Korea Human Rights Act," which included the increase of U.S. radio broadcasts aimed at Pyongyang, but North Korea viewed it as more evidence of U.S. hostile policy and declared it possessed a nuclear weapon in early 2005.<sup>15</sup> The U.S. should continue to promote human rights in North Korea but it can be done without completely severing relations with Pyongyang over human rights. As Bader noted, even when China was weak, "pressure and sanction on human rights" was not "successful in altering" negative Chinese behavior.<sup>16</sup> While the U.S. should not ignore human rights, it needs to rely more on organizations such as the UN and bilateral engagement to address the issue.

Second, what form of power behavior is likely to succeed against North Korea? According to Michael Wallerstein, the time has come to consider a pre-emptive military strike to eliminate the growing North Korean nuclear threat to the U.S. homeland. He has warned that, as the U.S. pays only "limited attention" to Pyongyang, the latter has processed more fissile materials, and enhanced its nuclear ICBM capabilities, which include mobile ICBM (KN-08) and submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs). Although Wallerstein assessed that the "workable ICBM capability" is "at least several years away," North Korea is actively pursuing a survivable nuclear deterrent and that would change the "military calculus" for Washington. The fielding of the KN-08 and SLBM capabilities signal Kim would have an effective nuclear deterrent. As a result, Wallerstein argues that the time for diplomacy is over since it is not likely to work. He advocates more sanctions and a declaratory policy to launch a pre-emptive military strike if

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<sup>15</sup> Chinoy, *Meltdown*, pp. 221-224.

<sup>16</sup> Bader, *Obama and China's Rise*, p. 3.

Pyongyang continues its “nuclear or missile tests” or “deploys new and threatening military systems.”<sup>17</sup> This means Washington must be willing to use force even if Beijing and Moscow are likely to oppose it and could intervene to protect their interests. In other words, is the U.S. willing to risk another war in Korea?

Unless Washington is confident it can gain the support of its key allies to use force and deal with the potential fallout from it (e.g., resumption of limited war that threatens Seoul), it must seriously consider engagement with North Korea while there is still time to prevent it from acquiring a survivable nuclear deterrent. This will require high-level U.S. engagement with Kim. As discussed in Chapter 4, Erik Cornell, the former Swedish Chargé d'affaires to Pyongyang, advised, “Any negotiation worth its name would have to take place in Pyongyang, where those in power did not actually take part but were at least indirectly accessible.”<sup>18</sup> This is good advice, but I would argue if the U.S. is serious about engagement a U.S. Cabinet-level official should lead the negotiation with North Korea (as it did with Iran). If Kim is capable of using smart power as I have suggested, he is likely to de-escalate and try to get the best deal possible. For this approach to work, the U.S. must be willing to coexist with North Korea and commit to long-term engagement. The expectation should be to dismantle its nuclear and related programs gradually while using economic and energy assistance to influence the regime by enabling social change to accelerate from within the country. According to Kishore Mahbubani, rather than imposing sanctions (which insulates Pyongyang from international norms and promotes its siege mentality), the West should engage North Korea to establish trade and investment networks with the regime and its people. This approach is more likely to accelerate change in North Korea than sanctions,<sup>19</sup> and weaken Pyongyang’s argument for U.S. hostile policy.

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<sup>17</sup> Mitchel B. Wallerstein, “The Price of Inattention: A Survivable North Korean Nuclear Threat,” *The Washington Quarterly*, Fall 2015, pp. 22-34.

<sup>18</sup> Cornell, *North Korea Under Communism*, p. 66.

<sup>19</sup> Kishore Mahbubani, *The Great Convergence: Asia, The West, and the Logic of One World* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2013), p. 48.

Third, what resources are available to implement the strategy? The U.S. can continue to apply more sanctions or consider diplomacy and/or military strikes. As noted, sanctions do not seem to work as North Korea develops more innovative ways to counter them. With respect to the use of force, it is commonly acknowledged that the U.S.-South Korea alliance has the military capability to defeat the North in war but the costs are assessed to be too high, especially for Seoul. Moreover, “The outside world has little idea of where the actual nuclear material and weapons are stored or hidden,” and that means it will be difficult to launch even a surgical strike to eliminate the North’s nuclear arsenal.<sup>20</sup> As a result, before North Korea operationalizes its nuclear ICBMs, the best option is to rely on bilateral and multilateral diplomacy to resolve the nuclear issue. Without a serious diplomatic effort, China and Russia are likely to blame the U.S. for the growing instability on the Korean Peninsula. Washington must also work even more closely with Seoul and Tokyo to build consensus for this approach. However, if the U.S. ignores diplomacy, it would have to consider the use of force under much more difficult circumstances when North Korea will be on the threshold of acquiring a survival deterrent within the next several years. The U.S. would either have to accept North Korea as a nuclear weapons state or consider a limited military strike on a known nuclear facility or a missile launch pad to send a signal it is willing to use force. Even this could be problematic since the U.S. will have to answer the question about the credibility of U.S. intelligence that would justify a pre-emptive strike. Nevertheless, a recent report in January 2016 indicates the U.S.-South Korea Alliance is “considering a military exercise that would simulate a pre-emptive strike against North Korea’s nuclear weapons capabilities.”<sup>21</sup> Preparing for the

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<sup>20</sup> Moore, ed., *North Korean Nuclear Operationality*, pp. 149-151.

<sup>21</sup> Julian Ryall, “US and South Korea plan simulated nuclear strike on North Korea,” *The Telegraph*, January 14, 2016, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/northkorea/12099482/US-and-South-Korea-plan-simulated-nuclear-strike-on-North-Korea.html> (accessed January 15, 2016).

worst-case scenario should be expected but, without buy-in from Beijing and Moscow, the use of force is unlikely to resolve the issue.

Fourth, what is the probability of success of long-term engagement and the use of force as a last resort? As we have seen from the findings in Chapter 6, Gallucci (e.g., freeze of the North Korean nuclear program) and Hill (e.g., partial dismantlement of its plutonium program) both defended the outcomes of their nuclear deals with Pyongyang. Although former Vice President Cheney claimed that both Clinton and Bush taught Pyongyang how to use a coercive strategy to obtain U.S. concessions while expand its nuclear arsenal,<sup>22</sup> others have acknowledged the positive outcomes of Gallucci's and Hill's negotiation efforts. According to Matthew Bunn, a nuclear policy expert from Harvard University, the 1994 Agreed Framework froze the North Korean nuclear program for almost a decade before Bush abolished the deal. The North Koreans may have hedged by starting a uranium enrichment program, but "there was no plutonium being produced for nuclear weapons." In fact, Bunn stated, "When the US was engaged with trying to implement the terms of the deal... there was real progress." When the U.S. reversed course for a hardline policy of "isolation and sanctions," the North Koreans withdrew from the NPT, built a nuclear bomb, and conducted a nuclear test in 2006.<sup>23</sup>

Robert Gard, a retired U.S. Army lieutenant general and Chair of the Board of the Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation, was more direct about one of the lessons learned from Washington's nuclear negotiations with Pyongyang. He argued that the "United States must follow through on the commitments it makes during the negotiating process." He emphasized that, as part of the 1994 nuclear agreement, the U.S. "committed to reduce trade and investment barriers for North

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<sup>22</sup> Cheney, *In My Time*, pp. 490-493.

<sup>23</sup> Matthew Bell, "The Iran nuclear deal has North Korea written all over it," PRI, July 21, 2015, <http://www.pri.org/stories/2015-07-21/iran-nuclear-deal-has-north-korea-written-all-over-it> (accessed September 26, 2015).

Korea within three months, to work a normalization of relations, and to permit the North Korean regime to build two light water reactors, the first to be completed in 2003.” Nevertheless, Washington chose not to take any substantive actions to meet its obligations for six years. For instance, the foundation for the first of two LWRs “was not poured until August 2002, about eight years after the framework was agreed upon.” One has to wonder what could have been accomplished through serious engagement at a time when significant social change was occurring in North Korea during the famine years. As discussed in Chapter 6, there was significant progress under Clinton when he decided to coexist with Pyongyang and persuaded the Kim regime he was serious about normalization. The fate of the Korean Peninsula could have been different if Bush had embraced Clinton’s policy of engagement instead of seeking regime change. Nevertheless, Gard emphasized that even during the Bush years North Korea received some benefits. The U.S. also managed to convince Pyongyang to “disable its Yongbyon nuclear facilities, stop transferring nuclear materials or technology abroad, and disclose the details of its plutonium program.”<sup>24</sup>

In short, regardless of the perception that North Koreans always cheat, there is evidence that some progress can be made by negotiating with Pyongyang, especially when Washington and Pyongyang are able to establish trust. Although there is no guarantee the North Koreans will give up their nuclear weapons simply because the U.S. is willing to negotiate, it is still plausible to argue much more can be accomplished by seriously addressing some of their security concerns to build trust. The U.S. must acknowledge North Korea has valid security concerns because it truly believes it no longer has any patron that can provide extended nuclear deterrence, unlike South Korea. More importantly, Washington must

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<sup>24</sup> Robert Gard, “Keep Your Word,” *Foreign Affairs*, August 24, 2015, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/north-korea/2015-08-24/keep-your-word> (accessed August 23, 2015). Gard seems to suggest U.S. convinced North Korea to stop proliferating after the incident with Syria in 2007.

remember that the South Koreans also pursued their own nuclear weapons in the early 1970s when they sensed abandonment by the U.S., and this effort continued periodically until 2000. Seoul was finally exposed in 2004 as a nuclear “proliferation-problem.”<sup>25</sup> For negotiations to work, the U.S. must have some empathy for North Korea’s position to improve the probability of success.<sup>26</sup> The key is to show long-term commitment to the diplomatic process and that may require a bold move such as a U.S. nonaggression treaty with North Korea. As noted in Chapter 7, Bush chose not to pursue this option in October 2003 but he offered to consider a peace treaty in exchange for denuclearization in September 2005. The use of a more coercive strategy can succeed only if the U.S. is willing to pursue peaceful coexistence through long-term negotiations to gain the support of Beijing and Moscow before it considers options that risk instability or war in Korea.

Finally, what are the policy positions and preferences of the powers in the region? According to Xu Beina, Beijing does not support Washington’s use of coercive power to influence North Korean behavior. The Chinese view Washington’s “sanctions and pressure tactics... as humiliating and counterproductive.”<sup>27</sup> However, the reported H-bomb test in January 2016 could present a short-term opportunity for the U.S. to gain the support of Beijing to pressure Pyongyang, especially if the U.S. shows restraint by demonstrating its willingness to return to negotiations. By giving Kim Jong-un another opportunity to live up to his obligations to denuclearize, it will be more difficult for China and others to protect the Kim regime. Without doing more to engage Pyongyang, Beijing is unlikely to welcome U.S. actions that could bring instability to North Korea. In fact, Han Kwan-soo argues that if current estimates are correct a half-million North Korean refugees could migrate across the China-North Korea border

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<sup>25</sup> Kang Jungmin, Peter Hayes, Li Bin, Tatsujiro Suzuki, and Richard Tanter, “South Korea’s Nuclear Surprise,” *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* (January/February 2005), pp. 40-49.

<sup>26</sup> Kramer, “Rethinking Trust,” pp. 3-9.

<sup>27</sup> Beina Xu, “China-North Korea Relationship,” Council on Foreign Relations, August 22, 2014, <http://www.cfr.org/china/china-north-korea-relationship/p11097> (accessed November 11, 2015).



during a period of North Korean instability. This could start “a secessionist movement” in Northeast China where there are over two million ethnic Korean-Chinese and 300,000 North Korean refugees. It could also encourage other ethnic minorities in China to secede and embolden Taiwan as well. Beijing’s other core interests in North Korea include U.S. military intervention across the DMZ. No matter what the intent of U.S. intervention in North Korea is – humanitarian assistance, securing WMD, or general war – China would be threatened by a prospect of “a pro-American Korean Peninsula.”<sup>28</sup> Hence, without support from Beijing, the use of force against North Korea may not achieve denuclearization or reunification.

As discussed in Chapter 5, the North has constantly called for reunification over the years and it has also become an important issue for South Korea. According to Kim Byung-yeon, the South Koreans appear to be divided on the issue as the ruling conservative party supports “rapid reunification while the opposition [progressive] party is supporting gradual reunification.”<sup>29</sup> Perhaps this is why Chung Chong-wook, vice chairman of the Presidential Committee for Unification Preparation, had to retract his statement that “Seoul was secretly planning to assimilate the North by force.” Many in South Korea were not convinced by Chung’s subsequent back-pedaling that “peaceful unification is the only choice to bring the two Koreas together.” Paik Hak-soon of the Sejong Institute argued this hardline approach would only reinforce Pyongyang’s perception that Seoul is trying to “tear down and assimilate its regime” with its reunification policy.<sup>30</sup> This suggests the ability, at least for a conservative government in Seoul, to rapidly induce Pyongyang to accept peaceful reunification

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<sup>28</sup> Han Kwan-soo, “Discussion on Whether the Korean Peninsula Will Be Included in China’s Core Interest,” *The Korean Journal of Defense Analysis*, Vol. 27, No. 1, March 2015, pp. 61-65.

<sup>29</sup> Kim Byung-yeon, “Gradual reunification the answer,” *Korea JoongAng Daily*, October 23, 2015, p. 8.

<sup>30</sup> Sim Shuan, “Korean Unification: Plans For Forced Absorption Untrue, South Korean Official Says,” *International Business Times*, March 12, 2015, <http://www.ibtimes.com/korean-unification-plans-forced-absorption-untrue-south-korean-official-says-1844762> (accessed October 31, 2015).

would be nearly impossible. A confederation that promotes one country, two systems is a more plausible option even though it would take longer to achieve reunification. This would allow U.S. troops to remain in South Korea until significant progress is made on denuclearization and reunification before a peace treaty is signed.

According to Ponomareva and Rudov, Moscow believes Seoul and Washington ignore recent offers by Pyongyang to engage because both hope North Korea will collapse. On the contrary, Russia interprets Pyongyang's behavior as its "search for a new place and role in global politics." More importantly, Moscow empathizes with the North's behavior by highlighting U.S. and South Korean hardline policy toward North Korea. For example, the Russians argue combined U.S.-South Korean military exercises that simulate U.S. and South Korean troops "storming and taking over Pyongyang" are provocative. Moscow "opposes vigorously any attempt to solve the problem with the use of force, threats, pressure or regime change technologies, like in Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Libya, Syria or Ukraine." Hence, it claims the North Korean nuclear issue can be resolved only when "the legitimate interests of security of each and every country in the region, including the DPRK," is carefully considered through bilateral and multilateral diplomacy. Russia would even consider hosting a summit with Kim Jong-un since it believes "it is the direct communication of leaders that may dramatically change the situation over North Korea's problem and possibly result in a breakthrough."<sup>31</sup> These sentiments are not surprising since Leonid Petrov argues that Russia views Pyongyang as a victim of a U.S. policy "that punishes anyone who refuses to dance to Washington's tune." Petrov claims Moscow expects no change to the status quo until another progressive party comes to power in Seoul and persuades

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<sup>31</sup> Ponomareva and Rudov, "Russia-North Korea," pp. 47-48.

the U.S. “to accommodate North Korea.”<sup>32</sup> This does not bode well for U.S. hardline policy toward the North, especially the use of force since Moscow has demonstrated it can play a spoiler role in Syria.

On the other hand, Tokyo claimed in late October 2015 that its forces could conduct military operations in North Korea to address the North Korean threat without Seoul’s permission.<sup>33</sup> This was a major concern for Seoul at the time but South Korea and Japan agreed to resolve the “comfort women” issue in early January 2016, and the H-bomb test re-galvanized U.S.-Japan-South Korea security cooperation. Senior diplomats from the three countries met in Tokyo and announced on January 16, 2016, that they would work together to “draft a stronger” UNSC Resolution to close the “loopholes” in the existing sanctions regime. They called on China to “fully cooperate and collaborate with the international community,” and pledged to hold regular trilateral meetings.<sup>34</sup> Some in South Korea had been arguing that Park’s “Trustpolitik” has not worked and urged her to “lean more to engagement.”<sup>35</sup> However, after the provocations in early 2016, it is clear the U.S. and its allies are unwilling to reward Pyongyang by returning to the 6PT and will pursue tougher sanctions against the North. Nevertheless, Beijing has little incentive to cooperate fully with the U.S. since it perceives that Washington is promoting an anti-China strategy to oppose nearly all its efforts to

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<sup>32</sup> Rob York, “Russian experts: U.S. must engage North Korea,” NK News.org, November 4, 2015, <https://www.nknews.org/2015/11/russian-experts-u-s-must-engage-north-korea/> (accessed November 5, 2015).

<sup>33</sup> Elizabeth Shim, “Japan, South Korea agree to end dispute on ‘comfort women’,” *UPI*, November 2, 2015, [http://www.upi.com/Top\\_News/World-News/2015/11/02/Japan-South-Korea-agree-to-end-dispute-on-comfort-women/9261446475230/](http://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2015/11/02/Japan-South-Korea-agree-to-end-dispute-on-comfort-women/9261446475230/) (accessed November 15, 2015).

<sup>34</sup> Reiji Yoshida, “Top diplomats from Japan, U.S., South Korea suggest China is key to North Korea Sanctions,” *The Japan Times*, January 16, 2016, <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2016/01/16/national/politics-diplomacy/top-diplomats-japan-u-s-south-korea-kick-off-trilateral-talks/#.VpsE9vkrK1t> (accessed January 16, 2016).

<sup>35</sup> Lee Sangsoo with Bernt Berger, “Park’s ‘Trustpolitik’ Challenge,” Institute for Security & Development Policy, Policy Brief No. 185, October 12, 2015, <http://www.isdp.eu/images/stories/isdp-main-pdf/2015-lee-berger-parks-trustpolitik-challenge.pdf> (accessed October 14, 2015).

increase China's influence in the Asia-Pacific region.<sup>36</sup> Therefore, tougher sanctions most likely will not work and only give the Kim regime more time to develop a survivable nuclear deterrent.

In conclusion, now is the time to test Pyongyang by committing to long-term engagement to change North Korea from within, but after the alleged H-bomb test the implementation of this approach will require Presidential leadership to deal with the anticipated criticisms from hardliners, to garner bureaucratic and Congressional support, and to reassure Seoul and Tokyo. As former Senator (and now Secretary of State) John Kerry noted in 2011, “We must get beyond the political talking point that engaging North Korea is somehow ‘rewarding bad behavior.’ It is *not*. We will set the time and place and we will negotiate in good faith. Talks will be based on our national security interests and those of our allies.” Kerry also warned, “We don’t know what renewed diplomatic engagement can accomplish. We do know this: Our silence invites a dangerous situation to get worse.”<sup>37</sup> The North Korean problem has indeed gotten worse and, unless we are prepared to engage in good faith, North Korea will soon threaten the U.S. with nuclear ICBMs. The use of diplomacy at 6PT can leverage Beijing’s and Moscow’s desire for North Korean denuclearization to pressure Pyongyang more effectively than sanctions. Time has come to fully engage Pyongyang and that will demonstrate Washington is willing to show restraint and coexist. However, time is running out on Pyongyang if it continues to expand its nuclear weapons and related programs. What this means is that, unlike the current approach with Iran, the U.S. must address the North Korean nuclear issue by fundamentally changing the U.S.-North Korea relationship.

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<sup>36</sup> Joshua Kurlantzick, “Let China Win. It’s Good for America,” *The Washington Post*, January 17, 2016, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/let-china-win-its-good-for-america/2016/01/14/bfec4732-b9b6-11e5-829c-26ffb874a18d\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/let-china-win-its-good-for-america/2016/01/14/bfec4732-b9b6-11e5-829c-26ffb874a18d_story.html) (accessed January 17, 2016).

<sup>37</sup> John Kerry, “Opening Statement for a Committee on Foreign Relations United States Senate Session on Breaking the Cycle of North Korean Provocations,” 112<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1st sess., March 1, 2011, pp. 1-2.

This realization suggests Nye's smart power framework can also be used to conduct future areas of research, such as the examination of how relatively weaker authoritarian regimes such as Iran and Russia may be using smart power to achieve their aims.

For instance, what does the application of the smart power framework suggest about Iran's strategic behavior in Iraq before and after the U.S. military intervention in 2003? What does smart power theory suggest about the Iran nuclear deal? Was Russia's intervention in Syria part of its smart power strategy to regain its influence in the Middle East? Is Russia using smart power in the Near Abroad to restore its lost empire? The results of such research could validate Nye's smart power framework as an analytical tool and enhance understanding of Iran's and Russia's behavior. This chapter has highlighted the findings of this unique study which attempted for the first time to apply Nye's smart power theory methodically to understand a very difficult problem – North Korea. It did so by using a multi-case study that for the first time examined North Korea's provocations from the Korean War to August 2015. Finally, I have also assumed Nye's smart power theory can be used as a hypothesis to support abductive research strategies. However, this requires further research by exploring questions such as those I have offered for future research. With respect to current U.S. policy toward Pyongyang, it is clear the status quo is not working and it is time for the U.S. to exercise smart power of its own to resolve the North Korea problem.

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## Appendix A

<b>Members of the South Korean Army Founders Association and Their Ties to the Japanese</b>		
<b>Military Number/Name</b>	<b>Occupation During Colonial Period</b>	<b>Rank Attained in the South Korean Army</b>
10001/Lee Hyung-gun	Captain, Japanese Army	One of three officers to be promoted to Four-stars during the Korean War (along with Chung Il-kwon and Paik Sun-yup). Commanded 2 <sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division during the Korea War and Served as CJCS from 1954-1956 and Army Chief of Staff from 1956 to 1957
10002/Chae Byung-Duk	Major, Japanese Army	Army Chief of Staff during the opening days of the Korean War, was relived and killed in action on July 25, 1950.
10003/Yu Jae-Hung	Japanese Army service, Tokyo Security Command	Served as 7 <sup>th</sup> Infantry Division Commander during the Korean War and also served as Corps Commander. Later served as CJCS from 1957-1959.
10004/Jang Sok-yun	(Japanese) Manchurian Army	Retired as Colonel.
10005/Chung Il-Kwon	Japanese Army	Served as Regimental and Division Commander, and later became Army Chief of Staff from 1954-1956. One of the three original four-star generals promoted during the Korean War.
10006/Yang Guk-jin	Captain in the Manchurian Army	Served in the Korean National Police and became its first "Chief." He was the ROK Army G-4 (Logistics) and retired as a Lieutenant General.
10007/Mun Yi-jong	Unknown	Discharged as 2 <sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant only after two months in the Constabulary (later became the Army).
10008/Kim Hung-jun	Manchurian Army	Discharged as 2 <sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant only after six months in the Constabulary.
10009/Lee Young-sun	Japanese Naval Officer	Discharged as a Colonel and worked as a translator for the U.S. military during the Korean War.
10010/Choi Ju-jong	Manchurian Army	Served as 8 <sup>th</sup> Division Commander before retiring as Major General.
10011/Choi Kyong-nok	Japanese Army Officer	Served as Division Commander and later became Army Chief of Staff from 1960-1961.
10012/Lee Chun-kyung	Senior NCO in the Japanese Army	Served in the "support" field before commanding a division and retired as a brigadier general.
10013/Jang Chang-guk	Japanese Army Officer	Commanded the 9 <sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment on Jeju Island in 1947. Served as CJCS from 1965-1967.

10014/Lee Byung-jo	Unknown	Left the Constabulary as a major in 1947 because of his involvement with the Communists.
10015/Lee Sang-Jin	Unknown	Left the Army as a major in 1949 because of his involvement with the Communists.
10016/Kim Young-hwan	Japanese Army Officer	South Korean Air Force pilot who was missing in action during the Korean War.
10017/Kim Mun-bong	Japanese Army	Commanded Second ROK Army that control the rear area and retired as a Lieutenant General.
10018/Min Ki-sik	Served in the Japanese Army and then transferred to become an officer in the Manchurian Army	Commanded the 25 <sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, the First ROK Army, and ROK Army Chief of Staff from 1963-1965.
10019/Im Sun-ha	Japanese Army Officer	Retired as Major General.
10020/Pak Byung-kwon	Infantry Lieutenant in the Japanese Army	Retired as Lieutenant General and became Minister of Defense from 1961-1963.
10021/Pak Ki-Byung	Japanese Military Police Officer	He was unusual for a Constabulary officer because he could not speak English. He commanded an infantry division before retiring as a major general.
10022/ Shim On-bong	Japanese Army Officer	He retired as a Lieutenant General.
10023/Paik In-yup	Japanese Army Officer	Commanded the 17 <sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment that was cut off from the Ongjin Peninsula during the opening days of the Korean War. Served as Division and Corps commander and retired as a Lieutenant General.
10024/An Jung-hwa	Unknown	Left the Constabulary as a 2 <sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant in 1946.
10025/Yun Byung-ho	Unknown	Left the Constabulary as a Major in 1947.
10026/Won In-sup	Unknown	Left the Constabulary as 2 <sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant in 1946.
10027/Won Tae-sup	Japanese Army Officer	Served as finance officer and retired as a Brigadier General.
10028/Cho Am	Unknown	Killed in action as Lieutenant Colonel in August 1950.
10029/Lee Jong-suk	Japanese Army Service	Chief of Transportation and retired as brigadier general.
10030/Kim Jong-kap	Japanese Army Officer	Served as Corps commander and retired as a lieutenant general. Served as Vice Minister of Defense from 1956-1957.
10031/Kim Jong-oh	Japanese Army Service	Served as Vice Army Chief of Staff and CJCS from 1960-1965 and simultaneously served as Army Chief of Staff from 1961-1963. Retired as four star general.
10032/Pak Dong-Gyun	Medical Officer in the Manchurian Army	Served in the medical field and retired as a Major General.
10033/Ha Jae-pal	Unknown	Left the Constabulary within weeks of being commissioned as 2 <sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant in 1946.

10034/Lee Chi-Op	Japanese Army Officer	Commanded Regiment During the Korean War, and later commanded the 27 <sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, and retired as a Brigadier General.
10035/Kim Kye-won	Japanese Army Officer	Retired as four star general and served as head of the Korea CIA.
10036/Yu Hae-jun	Served in the Manchurian Army before defecting to the Chinese Army during WWII.	Retired as Major General.
10037/Lee Song-ga	Served as Major in the Chinese Nationalist Army under Chiang Kai-shek.	Commanded the 8 <sup>th</sup> Infantry Division during the Korean War, and retired as Major General.
10038/Ham Byung-son	Japanese Army Officer	Served as Corps Commander before retiring as a Lieutenant General.
10039/Yu Hung-su	Cavalry Officer in the Japanese Army	Commanded a Division in ROK Army I Corps and retired as a Brigadier General.
10040/Chung Rae-hyuk	Unknown	Commanded the 27 <sup>th</sup> Infantry Division and retired as Lieutenant General.
10041/Won Young-duk	Lieutenant Colonel in the Manchurian Army medical corps.	Served as ROK armed forces Provost Marshal and retired as a lieutenant general in 1962.
10042/Kim Dong-young	Born in Hawaii	He left for the U.S. after serving in the Army as a Lieutenant Colonel and returned to serve in Korea as a US Army private.
10043/Kim Byung-kil	Served in Japanese Army	Served as Deputy Commander, 8 <sup>th</sup> Infantry Division and retired as a Brigadier General.
10044/Choi Hung-Hee	Japanese Army	Retired as a Major General.
10045/Kim Hyong-il	Japanese Army	Served as both Division Commander and Intelligence Officer, and retired as Lieutenant General.
10046/Hwang Hon-chin	Japanese Army Officer	Served as Chief of the Adjutant General Corps and retired as a Brigadier General.
10047/Kim Ik-yol	Japanese Army	Served in Jeju Island during the counter insurgency in 1948 and became a Division and Corps Commander before retiring as a Lieutenant General.
10048/Chung Man-ki	Unknown	Killed in Action during the Korean War; posthumously promoted to Brigadier General.
10049/An Dong-sun	Japanese Army Officer	Served as an Ordnance Officer and retired as Brigadier General.
10050/Ham Jun-Ho	Japanese Army	Killed in action while serving as Regimental Commander in June 1950, and posthumously promoted to Brigadier General.
10051/Choi Young-hee	Japanese Army Officer	Served as Corps and Army Commander before serving as ROK Army Chief of Staff in 1960. Later served as Minister of Defense in 1968.
10052/Mun Young-chae	Captain in the Manchurian Army	In charge of the police on Jeju Island, and retired as a Brigadier General in 1959.

10053/Choi Nam-gun	Manchurian Army	Discharged from the Army as a Lieutenant Colonel for being a Communist.
10054/Paik Sun-yup	Manchurian Army Officer	Born in Pyongyang, he commanded the ROK Army 1 <sup>st</sup> Infantry Division at the start of the Korean War, and participated in the Armistice negotiations. He was one of three original four star generals at the end of the Korean War. He later served twice as the ROK Army Chief of Staff and CJCS from 1959-1960. He retired as Korea's most decorated soldier.
10055/Kim Paik-il	Manchurian Army	Served as Deputy Army Chief of Staff when the Korean War started and commanded I Corps and was killed in an airplane crash in March 1951.
10056/Lee Han-rim	Manchurian Army	Served as Corps Commander and retired as a Lieutenant General and became the Minister of Transportation.
10057/Chung Jin-hwan	Japanese Army	Served as the Chief of the Signal Corps and retired as a Major General.
10058/Shin Sang-chul	Japanese Army Officer	Chief of the Military Police before the Korean War and commanded the 7 <sup>th</sup> Infantry Division during the war. He retired as a Major General in the ROK Air Force.
10059/Oh Duk-jun	Japanese Army Officer	Survived the atomic bombing at Hiroshima, and served as the commander of III Corps and retired as a Major General.
10060/Kwon Sok-pil	Unknown	Discharged from the Constabulary as a 2 <sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant after one month.
10061/Han In-jun	Unknown	Discharged from the Constabulary as a 2 <sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant after four month.
10062/Kim Jong-myon	Japanese Army Officer	Served as the Chief of the Intelligence (G-2) during the Constabulary period (before it became an army), and retired as a Brigadier General.
10063/Paik Sun-jin	Japanese Army	Deputy logistics officer (G-4) for the Army and retired as a Major General.
10064/Suh Byung-ki	Japanese Army	Served as a ordnance officer before retiring as a Brigadier General in 1961.
10065/Choi Chang-mu	Unknown	Discharged from the Constabulary as a 2 <sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant after 2 months.
10066/Ui Jae-hwa	Unknown	Discharged from the Army as a colonel after 3 and a half years of service.
10067/Cho Byung-gun	Unknown	He defected to North Korea during the Korean War.
10068/Kim Hyun-su	Japanese Army	Served in Psychological Operations unit and was killed on the third day of the Korean War, and posthumously promoted to Brigadier General.
10069/Paik Nam-kwon	Japanese Army	Retired as a Major General.

10070/Kim Jong-sok	Unknown	Discharged from the Constabulary as a Lieutenant Colonel in 1948.
10071/Kim Wan-young	Japanese Army	Served as Judge Advocate Corps and retired as a Major General.
10072/Oh Il-gyun	Unknown	He defected to North Korea during the Korean War.
10073/Choi Sang-min	Unknown	Discharged as a Major in 1948.
10074/Kim Byung-Hwui	Japanese Army	Retired as a Major General.
10075/Choi Suk	Japanese Army Officer	Commanded 3 <sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division during the Korean War, and retired as a Lieutenant General.
10076/Kim Sang-bok	Japanese Army	Retired as a Lieutenant General and served as the Minister of Home Affairs.
10077/Kim Young-bae	Japanese Army Officer	Served as Assistant Division Commander during the Korean War and served as the Army Chief of Staff from 1965-1966.
10078/Kim Ki-hung	Unknown	Discharged as a 2 <sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant after 10 months in the Constabulary.
10079/Lee Hoo-rak	Japanese Military	Retired as a Major General and served as Director of the Korea CIA.
10080/Jang Do-young	Japanese Army	Served as Army Chief of Staff for four months in 1961 and also served as the Minister of Defense in 1961.
10081/Lee Sang-chul	Japanese Army	Retired as Major General.
10082/Lee Hee-Kwon	Japanese Army Officer	Retired as Brigadier General and Immigrated to the U.S.
10083/Kim Sang-kil	Unknown	Discharged from the Constabulary as a Captain in 1947.
10084/Jang Ho-jin	Japanese Army	Retired as Brigadier General.
10085/Lee Chang-il	Unknown	Killed during the Korean War as a Colonel.
10086/Min Byung-Kwon	Japanese Army Officer	Served as Army Adjutant General and retired as Lieutenant General.
10087/Jang Woo-sok	Unknown	Discharged as 2 <sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant after 8 months in the Constabulary.
10088/Paik In-ki	Unknown	Died in 1948 as a Lieutenant Colonel and posthumously promoted to Brigadier General.
10089/Lee Hyun-jae	Unknown	Left the Constabulary as a Lieutenant Colonel.
10090/Na Jong-ha	Unknown	Discharged as 2 <sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant after 4 months in the Constabulary.
10091/Pak Jin-kyung	Japanese Army Engineer Officer	Commanded the 9 <sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment but was assassinated by insurgents on Jeju Island in 1948.
10092/Han Chun	Unknown	Discharged as a 2 <sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant after 10 months in the Constabulary.
10093/Kim Il-hwan	Finance Officer in the Manchurian Army	Served as Finance Officer and retired as a Lieutenant General.
10094/Oh Kyu-bom	Unknown	Discharged from the Army as a Lieutenant Colonel in 1949.
10095/Choi Chang-un	Japanese Army	Served as the Chief of Transportation and retired as Lieutenant General in 1966.

10096/Song Yo-chan	NCO in the Japanese Army	Served initially in the Korean National Police and commanded the Capital Division during the Korean War and later commanded the 1 <sup>st</sup> ROK Army. He also served as Army Chief of Staff from 1959-1960 and served as Minister of Defense in 1961.
10097/Na Hak-son	Unknown	Discharged from the Army as a Major in 1949.
10098/Lee Paik-woo	Japanese Army	Commanded the 26 <sup>th</sup> Regiment but deserted the unit during the Korean War. He retired as a Brigadier General in 1959.
10099/Jang Un-san	Japanese Army	He was discharged as a Lieutenant Colonel in July 1950.
10100/Kim Ung-su	Japanese Army Officer	Retired as a Major General.
10101/Kang Young-hun	Japanese Army Officer	Served as a regimental commander during the Korean War and later as 6 <sup>th</sup> Corps Commander, and retired as a Lieutenant General.
10102/Lee Ji-Hyung	Japanese Army	Served in the Judge Advocate Corps and retired as Brigadier General.
10103/Lee Sun-young	Manchurian Army	Served in the Finance Corps and retired as a Brigadier General.
10104/Kim Jong-mun	Japanese Army	Served in Psychological Operations and retired as a Major General.
10105/Pak Hyun-su	Japanese Army	Retired as Major General.
10106/Pak Kyung-won	Japanese Army	Retired as Lieutenant General and served as the Minister of Home Affairs.
10107/Shin Hak-jin	Manchurian Army	A medical doctor and served as the Army Surgeon General and retired as Major General.
10108/Lee Myung-jae	Japanese Army	Served as commander of 8 <sup>th</sup> Infantry Division and retired as Major General.
10109/Yun Su-hyun	Manchurian Army	Served in the Quartermaster Corps and retired as Brigadier General.
10110/Lee Ung-jun	Japanese Army Colonel	U.S. Army leaders were hesitant to let him assume a publicly important role in the ROK Army because he had risen so high in the Japanese military, fearing an anti-Japanese backlash. He served as Inspector General and 3 <sup>rd</sup> Division Commander. He was promoted to Lieutenant General and served as the first Army Chief of Staff from 1948-1949. He is considered to be the father of the ROK Army.

Source: General Lee, Chi-op, *Call Me "Speedy Lee": Memoirs of a Korean War Soldier* (Seoul, Korea: WonMin Publishing House, 2001), pp. 215-239.



## **Appendix B**

### **North Korea's 8-Point Program of National Salvation Declared on April 13, 1971**

1. To make the US imperialist aggressor troops withdraw from south Korea and solve the national question by the efforts of the Korean people themselves on the principle of national self-determination.
2. To reduce the armed forces in north and south Korea to 100,000 or less respectively and lighten the heavy burdens of military expenditure to relax the tension and guarantee a durable peace in our country and jointly counter the aggression by the US imperialists and the Japanese militarists.
3. To abolish and declare invalid the south Korea-US "mutual defence pact", the south Korea-Japan "agreements" and all other treacherous and shackling treaties and agreements concluded with foreign countries against the interests of the nation and oppose all forms of interference in the domestic affairs by foreign aggressive forces and attain national sovereignty.
4. To hold free north-south general elections on the principles of universal, equal and direct suffrage by secret ballot in a completely democratic atmosphere in which the freedom of expression of the will by the people is fully guaranteed, without interference from any outside forces, and establish a unified democratic central government representing the general will of the entire Korean people.
5. To ensure democratic rights to the people of all walks of life in south Korea, such as the freedom of speech, the press, assembly, association, demonstration and strike, release all the political offenders who have been arrested and imprisoned on charges of having called for the peaceful unification of the fatherland and guarantee the conditions for freely conducting political activities in any area of the country to all the political parties, public organizations and individual personages of north and south Korea.
6. To establish prior to complete reunification, if need be, a Confederation of north and south Korea as a transitional step for solving the urgent problems of common concern of the nation and hastening national reunification, leaving the differing socio-political systems in the north and the south as they are.

7. To promote the economic interchange and mutual cooperation in the spheres of science, culture, arts and sports between the north and south and realize the travel of personages and correspondence to alleviate the suffering of the people resulting from the split and restore the severed ties of the nation.

8. To hold a north-south political consultative meeting for discussing immediate tasks of the nation and solving the question of the country's reunification.

*Reunification Program of the DPRK* (Pyongyang, Korea: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1982), pp. 89-90.

## **Appendix C**

### **DPRK Releases Memorandum on U.S. Hostile Policy on August 31, 2012**

The Foreign Ministry of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea released a memorandum Friday, terming the U.S. hostile policy towards DPRK the main obstacle in resolving the nuclear issue.

Following is the full text of the memorandum:

On July 20 last, the Ministry of the Foreign Affairs of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) announced that it has reached the point of having to completely reexamine the nuclear issue due to the continued U.S. hostile policy towards the DPRK.

The U.S. hostile policy is the root cause that has turned the Korean peninsula into the most dangerous hotspot in the world and it is also the main obstacle to durable peace and stability.

The nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula is none other than the outcome of the U.S. hostile policy and therefore, only when the U.S. abandons its hostile policy, will it be possible to resolve the issue.

The Ministry of the Foreign Affairs of the DPRK issues the following memorandum to shed light on the contrast between the U.S. claim of having no hostile intent towards the DPRK and its actual behavior.

#### **1. The hostile concept that blocks the settlement of the nuclear issue**

An important agreement was announced on February 29, 2012 as a result of the high-level talks between the DPRK and U.S. The U.S. reaffirmed that "it no longer has hostile intent towards the DPRK and that it is prepared to take steps to improve the bilateral relations in the spirit of mutual respect for sovereignty and equality and agreed to provide a substantive amount of food assistance to the DPRK. The DPRK, considering the concerns of the U.S., agreed to a moratorium on nuclear tests, long-range missile launches and uranium enrichment activity while productive dialogues continue.

However, when the DPRK launched the "Kwangmyongsong 3", an artificial satellite for peaceful purposes, on April 13 last, the U.S. took issue with it, arguing that the space launch was based on the same technology with the long-range missile launch and went ahead with unilaterally abrogating the February 29 Agreement, upgrading sanctions on the DPRK.

It is true that both satellite carrier rocket and missile with warhead use the similar technology. However, when other countries conduct satellite launch, the U.S. neither takes an issue with any of it, calling it a missile launch, nor takes actions like imposing sanctions. The U.S. saw our satellite carrier rocket as a long-range missile that would one day reach the U.S. because it regards the DPRK as an enemy.

That is the reason why the ever-first agreement reached between the DPRK and the U.S. since the Obama administration took office ended up with failure as other previous DPRK-U.S. agreements.

At the beginning of DPRK-U.S. bilateral talks held during the Clinton administration, the U.S. pledged on “assurances against the threat and use of force, including nuclear weapons.” (DPRK-U.S. Joint Statement, June 11, 1993)

At the final stage of the bilateral talks, the U.S. agreed to “move towards full normalization of the political and economic relations” with the DPRK. (DPRK-U.S. Agreed Framework, October 21, 1994)

The U.S. also declared that it would not have hostile intent towards the DPRK. (DPRK-U.S. Joint Communiqué, October 12, 2000)

However, all these commitments were not honored but were broken off overnight with the change of each U.S. administration.

The Bush administration turned down all the DPRK-U.S. agreements reached during the Clinton administration, listed the DPRK as an "axis of evil" and singled it out as a target of preemptive nuclear strike. (State of the Union Address, January 30, 2002 and Nuclear Posture Review, March 2002)

The extremely dangerous hostile policy pursued by the Bush administration forced the DPRK to withdraw completely from the NPT and direct its peaceful nuclear power industry for producing electricity to the building-up of self-defensive nuclear deterrent.

At the six-party talks, the U.S. affirmed that it has "no intention to attack or invade the DPRK with nuclear or conventional weapons". (Joint Statement of the Six-Party Talks, September 19, 2005)

As action steps to implement the September 19 Joint Statement, the U.S. gave assurances that it would improve the relations with the DPRK and move towards the full diplomatic relations. (Six-Party Talks Agreements, February 13 and October 3, 2007)

However, four years has elapsed since the last round of the six-party talks, which was held in December 2008 and it is not yet resumed. During the intervening time, the level of U.S. hostility towards the DPRK was not lowered but further increased.

The first step the Obama administration took towards the DPRK was taking issue with the DPRK's launch of peaceful satellite "Kwangmyongsong 2".

The U.S. extreme hostile policy aimed at depriving the DPRK of its sovereign right for peaceful use of the outer space, the right recognized by international law, called upon the DPRK's self-defensive response, namely another nuclear test. It again led to the repetition of the vicious cycle of mistrust and confrontation; the U.S. imposed ever-harsh sanctions on the DPRK and the DPRK responded by starting the construction of light-water reactor (LWR) on its own and the production of enriched uranium to meet the fuel need for the LWR.

The reality proves that unless the long held hostile concept of the U.S. towards the DPRK is rooted out as a whole, nothing can be resolved but the confrontation and the risk of conflict would rather increase.

In the early stages of the DPRK-U.S. talks, the DPRK maintained that the U.S. should first abandon its hostile policy, in order to resolve the nuclear issue, whereas the U.S. insisted that the DPRK should first give up its nuclear program in order to normalize the DPRK-U.S. relations.

In the process, thanks to the sincerity and generosity of the DPRK, the principle of simultaneous action steps, known as "word for word" and "action for action", was agreed upon and served as the basis for the dialogue.

The 20 year-long history of the talks between the DPRK and the U.S. has shown that even the principle of simultaneous action steps is not workable unless the hostile concept of the U.S. towards the DPRK is removed.

## 2. The root of the U.S. hostile policy towards the DPRK

The hostile policy of the U.S. towards the DPRK has deep historical roots.

Post-war generation in the U.S. and other countries has no proper understanding of the historical roots of the U.S. hostile policy towards the DPRK; they do not know the fact that the nuclear issue on the Korean Peninsula stems from the U.S. hostile policy towards the DPRK and even misunderstand that the U.S. is hostile to the DPRK because of the nuclear issue.

The fact is that the U.S. hostility towards the DPRK is not based on the nuclear issue of the Korean Peninsula. The DPRK had no other choice but to develop nuclear weapons, because of the hostile policy and the increasing nuclear threat from the U.S. which is the world's biggest nuclear power.

From the very beginning, the U.S. defined the DPRK as an enemy and refused to recognize its sovereignty. The U.S. continued to step up its hostile moves against the DPRK, with the ultimate goal of overthrowing the political system of our people's choice.

The institutional and legal mechanism against the DPRK has been in place long before the rise of the nuclear issue. Military attacks and nuclear threats aimed at eliminating our ideology and system have been openly committed, and economic sanctions and international pressure for isolating and suffocating the DPRK have been persistent.

The end of World War II meant the beginning of the Cold War between the East and the West.

The U.S. needed a bridgehead to contain the "southward expansion" of the then Soviet Union and to make an inroad into the Eurasian continent. It was out of this requirement that the U.S. hurriedly drew a line along the 38th parallel before the surrender of Japan in order to secure that bridgehead. This led to the tragic division of the Korean nation and its territory.

For the U.S. engaged in the Cold War, the area south of the 38th parallel was its ally and that north of it was the enemy.

It is a general international practice for the states to establish diplomatic relations with new independent sovereign state. The establishment of diplomatic relations between countries does not necessarily mean specially favorable sentiment or close friendship; it is an indication of political stand that they regard each other as an equal part of the international community.

Despite the differences in political ideology and system, the U.S. established diplomatic relations with the former Soviet Union as well as other socialist countries in the Eastern Europe. However, the U.S. refused even to call the DPRK by its official name, to say nothing of the establishment of diplomatic relations.

The UN recognized the sovereignty of the DPRK when it joined it in 1991. The DPRK currently maintains diplomatic relations with 166 countries which account for about 86 per cent of the UN membership. The U.S., however, refuses to recognize

the DPRK as a sovereign state with whom it may co-exist in the international community.

Out of 193 member states of the UN, only the DPRK, together with Iran and Cuba have no diplomatic ties with the U.S. This clearly shows that the U.S. pursues extremely hostile policy towards these countries unprecedented case in the history of contemporary international relations.

Hostile policy of the U.S. towards the DPRK finds its most clear expression in military area.

The DPRK and the U.S. have been technically at war against each other for more than sixty years even after the end of war; no comparable example can be found in the modern history.

The Korean Armistice Agreement concluded on July 27, 1953, is by no means an agreement that officially ended the war. Nor is it a lasting peace treaty. The Korean Armistice Agreement was the transitional measure aimed at withdrawing all foreign troops from the Korean Peninsula and ensuring permanent peace.

However, the U.S. deliberately chose to prolong the status of armistice.

In November 1953, the U.S. defined as its ultimate goal on the Korean Peninsula to maintain the ceasefire regime, to make south Korea its "military ally" and prevent the spread of communism across the entire Korean Peninsula until "pro-U.S. unification" is achieved. (US NSC Resolution No. 170)

Accordingly, the U.S. intentionally broke off the Geneva conference on peaceful resolution of the Korean issue in June 1954 and violated and nullified the key provisions of the Korean Armistice Agreement step by step by introducing modern military equipment including nuclear weapons into south Korea and by stepping up aggressive military exercises.

The U.S. turned down numerous peace proposals and initiatives put forward by the Government of the DPRK, such as the proposal for the conclusion of a peace treaty between the DPRK and the U.S. (1970s), tripartite talks proposal to include south Korea in the DPRK-U.S. talks (1980s), proposal for establishing a new peace mechanism (1990s).

The DPRK, China, U.S. and south Korea sat for the four-party talks in the late 1990s to set up a lasting peace regime on the Korean Peninsula. However, the talks could not produce any result, due to the absence of sincerity on the U.S. side.

At the beginning of the new century, the DPRK proposed that the signatories to the Korean Armistice Agreement sit together to discuss on declaring the end of the war and that the talks should be held to replace the Armistice Agreement with a peace treaty on the occasion of the 60th year of the Korean War outbreak. (Declaration for the development of North-South relations and peace and prosperity, October 4, 2007 and Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the DPRK, January 11, 2010). However, the U.S. turned a blind eye to all the above proposals.

The U.S. remains unchanged in its dogged position as regards the peace proposals of the DPRK; the U.S. position is that the conclusion of peace treaty is premature and the ceasefire regime is to be maintained. This means that the U.S. would continue to regard the DPRK as its enemy and warring party.

The U.S. has an array of different categories of war plans and scenarios targeting the DPRK, such as "OPLAN 5029", "OPLAN 5030", "OPLAN 5012", etc.; all these plans are for making the armed invasion of the DPRK and setting up its military rule.

It is pursuant to these war plans that the U.S. keeps on conducting various kinds of joint military exercises, such as "Focus Retina", "Freedom Bolt", "Team Spirit", "RSOI", "Key Resolve", "Foal Eagle", "Ulji Freedom Guardian", etc. All the above exercises seek to achieve the same goal but are conducted in different names.

The U.S. economic sanctions against the DPRK are an important tool for the pursuit of its long-standing hostile policy towards the DPRK.

The U.S. curtails trade with the DPRK and imposes all sorts of economic sanctions on such accusations that DPRK threatens regional stability, does not cooperate with the U.S. in its anti-terrorism efforts, engage in proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and that the DPRK is communist state, nonmarket economy, etc. (U.S. Congressional Research Service Report, April 25, 2011)

In particular, economic sanctions imposed on the DPRK before the rise of the nuclear issue have nothing to do with the nuclear issue and merely reflect the U.S. hostile concept towards the DPRK.

Having defined the DPRK as a "Marxist-Leninist state with a communist government", the U.S. has long maintained sanctions against the DPRK. (Export-Import Bank Act of 1945, as amended, and Foreign Assistance Act of 1961)

The U.S. began to apply the Trading with the Enemy Act to the DPRK from December 1950. A few days later, the U.S. Department of the Treasury issued



Foreign Assets Control Regulations to forbid any financial transactions involving, or on behalf of, the DPRK.

On June 26, 2008, more than half a century later, the then U.S. President Bush took measures to terminate the application of the Trading with the Enemy Act (TWEA) as regards the DPRK, pursuant to the agreement reached at the six-party talks. However, on the same day, Bush declared a state of emergency, saying that the weapons-usable fissile material in the possession of the DPRK constitutes an unusual and extraordinary threat to the security of the U.S. and that other provisions of sanctions on the DPRK should remain effective under the terms of the International Emergency Economic Powers Act and the National Emergencies Act. It meant that all property and interests of the DPRK which had been blocked as of June 16, 2000, would remain to be blocked and that a U.S. national would not be allowed to register, own, lease, operate or insure a vessel flagged by the DPRK.

The effectiveness of this measure has been intensified and extended annually by Obama who issued two Executive Orders, i.e. No. 13551 (August, 2010), and No. 13570 (April, 2011). It means that the Trading with the Enemy Act, nominally no longer applicable to the DPRK? actually continues to maintain its effect under different name.

The Trade Agreement Extension Act of the U.S. required the suspension of Most-Favored-Nation trade status for all communist countries. However, this Act was applied to the DPRK as early as September 1, 1951, long before the establishment of the socialist system in the DPRK. As a result, the DPRK was denied normal trade relations with the U.S.

The DPRK tops the list of countries to which the U.S. applies highest rate of tariff. It means that the DPRK would have to pay the highest tariff if it is to export its products to the U.S. The DPRK and Cuba are the only countries to which the U.S. applies this rule. The Trade Act of 1974 defined the DPRK as a communist state. Therefore, the DPRK is denied mutually preferential treatment in trade relations with the U.S.

The extent of obsession with the hostile concept towards the DPRK on the part of the U.S. finds its clear expression in the terms and provisions of the U.S.-instigated United Nations Security Council resolution adopted in the wake of the DPRK's first nuclear test. The U.S. sneaked a provision that banned export and import of luxury goods as regards the DPRK? a provision that has no relevance at all to the nuclear issue, in the resolution and rushed it through. It was a mean and foolish plot to undermine the reputation of our supreme leadership and drive a wedge between the leadership and our people.

Although the U.S. nominally removed the designation of the DPRK from the list of state sponsors of terrorism on October 11, 2008, under the agreement reached in the course of the six-party talks, no sanctions on the DPRK had actually been eased or lifted in effect because those sanctions are overlapped by the different U.S. domestic laws under different pretexts.

The sanctions listed above are only a tip of the iceberg of the economic sanctions which the U.S. applies to the DPRK.

According to the 2006 statistics published by the U.S. Congressional Research Service, the U.S. imposes some forty different kinds of sanctions on the DPRK; however, only a quarter or so of these sanctions are based on the different political system.

The remaining three quarters of the sanctions? sanctions under the pretext of "threat to the security of the U.S.", "proliferation of WMD", "sponsor of terrorism", "human rights", "religious freedom", "money laundering", "missile development", "human trafficking", etc., many of which are based on absurd allegations, are applied at the discretion of the U.S. President or relevant departments of the U.S. administration.

It points to the unjustifiable discrepancy between the words and deeds of the U.S. administration that claims to having "no hostile intent".

Since the roots remain to be there, it takes more than words to remove them, the hostile concept.

### 3. To Renounce the Hostile Policy is a Prerequisite for the Settlement of Nuclear Issue

The U.S. hostile policy pursued by the U.S. makes the prospect of denuclearizing the Korean peninsula all the more gloomy.

At present stage, there is no possibility of the U.S. giving up its hostile policy towards the DPRK. The actions taken by the U.S. towards the DPRK gets more hostile day by day, despite the claims made by the U.S. authorities that they have "no hostile intent" towards the DPRK.

In April this year, they flagrantly violated the sovereignty of the DPRK by unjustly challenging our peaceful satellite launch. In the wake of this, there occurred an unprecedented incident; the U.S. army stationed in south Korea fired live bullets to the DPRK national flag, taking it as the target.

This was followed by the extreme provocative action on the part of the U.S. intelligence institution which manipulated south Korean intelligence plot-breeding agency to fabricate the plot to demolish statues of the peerlessly great persons of Mt. Paektu. At the same time, the bilateral and tripartite aggression war exercises are on the increase between the U.S. and its followers in and around the Korean Peninsula and their offensive nature and scope are steadily expanded and strengthened.

All facts show that the intensity of the U.S. hostility towards the DPRK is being escalated.

This has a nexus with the U.S. new defense strategy made public by the Obama administration on January 5, 2012.

This strategy envisages increasing the U.S. armed forces in the Asia-Pacific region to the level of 60 per cent of all its military stationed abroad by way of drawing down 10 percent of its armed forces stationed in Europe by 2020.

In general, the arms build up necessitates justification of the "existence or threat of the enemy". The only country that the U.S. can consider as its enemy in Northeast Asia is the DPRK. Each of big countries normally would not describe the other as an enemy. It means that the U.S. will perceive the DPRK as its enemy for the purpose of augmenting its armed forces for such a long time so as to realize its new defense strategy.

In addition, the new defense strategy does not guarantee that the U.S. will not occupy the whole Korean Peninsula through a direct armed invasion, in order to form its military encirclement around the big countries in Eurasia.

The prevailing situation urges the DPRK to prevent the recurrence of war in the Korean Peninsula by all means and make up thoroughgoing preparations to wage a war for national reunification, in case the war is inevitably forced upon us.

This is the motive and backdrop for us to completely reexamine our nuclear issue.

The U.S. has two ways.

One way is to make bold and fundamental change in its cold war mindset to renounce its anachronistic policy toward the DPRK, and thus contribute to the peace and security in the Korean Peninsula and pave the way for ensuring its own security.

If the U.S. shows such courage in action, we will be willing to respond to it.

The great leader Comrade Kim Jong Il said on August 4, 1997 that we did not intend to regard the U.S. as the sworn enemy but wished for the normalization of the DPRK-U.S. relations.

The respected Marshal Kim Jong Un wants to open up a new chapter for the development of relations with the countries friendly towards us, unbound to the past.

Another way is to continue down the U.S. hostile policy as of today, resulting in further expanding and building up of the DPRK's nuclear arsenal.

If the U.S. seeks to meet its further interests at the cost of sacrificing the DPRK's interests, it will be inevitably met by strong response from the DPRK.

The DPRK has already emerged as a full-fledged nuclear weapons state, and the era when the U.S. threatened the DPRK with atomic bomb has gone by. We will not sit idle watching the increased hostile moves of the U.S. but will make every effort to defend the destiny of the country and the nation.

It will be a great mistake to regard our strong position as a kind of tactics.

We opted for building up nuclear deterrent, not because we wanted to trade it off for something but because we had to counter off the moves of the U.S., the biggest nuclear power in the world, aimed at eliminating the DPRK.

Our nuclear deterrent for self-defense is a treasured sword that prevents war and ensures peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula.

If the U.S. does not make a right choice, the DPRK's nuclear possession will inevitably be prolonged, modernizing and expanding its nuclear deterrent capability beyond the U.S. imagination.

KCNA, "DPRK Terms U.S. Hostile Policy Main Obstacle in Resolving Nuclear Issue," August 31, 2012, <http://www.kcna.co.jp/index-e.htm> (accessed November 11, 2014).

## **Appendix D**

### **North Korea's Declaration as a Nuclear Weapons State on April 1, 2013**

A law on consolidating the position of nuclear weapons state for self-defence was adopted in the DPRK. An ordinance of the Supreme People's Assembly of the DPRK in this regard was promulgated on Monday. The ordinance said as follows:

The DPRK is a full-fledged nuclear weapons state capable of beating back any aggressor troops at one strike, firmly defending the socialist system and providing a sure guarantee for the happy life of the people.

Having an independent and just nuclear force, the DPRK put an end to the distress-torn history in which it was subject to outside forces' aggression and interference and could emerge a socialist power of Juche which no one dares provoke.

The Supreme People's Assembly of the DPRK decides to consolidate the position of the nuclear weapons state as follows:

1. The nuclear weapons of the DPRK are just means for defence as it was compelled to have access to them to cope with the ever-escalating hostile policy of the U.S. and nuclear threat.
2. They serve the purpose of deterring and repelling the aggression and attack of the enemy against the DPRK and dealing deadly retaliatory blows at the strongholds of aggression until the world is denuclearized.
3. The DPRK shall take practical steps to bolster up the nuclear deterrence and nuclear retaliatory strike power both in quality and quantity to cope with the gravity of the escalating danger of the hostile forces' aggression and attack.
4. The nuclear weapons of the DPRK can be used only by a final order of the Supreme Commander of the Korean People's Army to repel invasion or attack from a hostile nuclear weapons state and make retaliatory strikes.
5. The DPRK shall neither use nukes against the non-nuclear states nor threaten them with those weapons unless they join a hostile nuclear weapons state in its invasion and attack on the DPRK.

6. The DPRK shall strictly observe the rules on safekeeping and management of nukes and ensuring the stability of nuclear tests.
7. The DPRK shall establish a mechanism and order for their safekeeping and management so that nukes and their technology, weapon-grade nuclear substance may not leak out illegally.
8. The DPRK shall cooperate in the international efforts for nuclear non-proliferation and safe management of nuclear substance on the principle of mutual respect and equality, depending on the improvement of relations with hostile nuclear weapons states.
9. The DPRK shall strive hard to defuse the danger of a nuclear war and finally build a world without nukes and fully support the international efforts for nuclear disarmament against nuclear arms race.
10. The related institutions shall take thorough practical steps for implementing this ordinance.

KCNA, "Law on Consolidating Position of Nuclear Weapons State Adopted," April 1, 2013, <http://www.kcna.co.jp/index-e.htm> (accessed September 26, 2015).

## Appendix E

### North Korea's Declaration of the *Byungjin* Line on April 2, 2013

The historic March 2013 plenary meeting of the Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea, held on Sunday, set forth a new strategic line on carrying on the economic construction and the building of nuclear armed forces simultaneously under the prevailing situation to meet the legitimate requirement of the developing revolution.

This line is aimed to beef up nuclear armed forces qualitatively and quantitatively with the U.S. nuclear threat to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea being escalated.

The line makes it possible for the DPRK to exert bigger efforts on economic construction while bolstering up the nation's defense capabilities with self-defensive nuclear armed forces.

It is a brilliant succession and development on a new higher stage of the unique line of simultaneously developing the economy and national defense, advanced and steadily maintained by the great Generalissimos Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il.

At the 5th Plenary Meeting of the 4th WPK Central Committee in December Juche 51 (1962), President Kim Il Sung advanced a unique and revolutionary line of developing the nation's economic construction and defense buildup simultaneously.

The President chose the line with the belief that a country should defend itself with its own efforts.

The strict implementation of the line turned the DPRK into a country, independent in politics, self-supporting in the economy and self-reliant in national defense, in the 1960s.

The country's self-reliant defense capabilities grew stronger under the Songun (military-first) politics pursued by leader Kim Jong Il. He had worked heart and soul to increase the military capability, stressing that top priority should be given to the military affairs and the defense industry serves as the key to building a thriving country.

The new strategic line represents the steadfast will of respected Marshal Kim Jong Un to build a powerful socialist nation on this land by successfully concluding the showdown with the U.S. by dint of the nuclear armed forces.

KCNA, "New Strategic Line, Succession of Line of Simultaneously Developing Economy and Defense," April 1, 2013, <http://www.kcna.us/2013/04/02/news-27/> (accessed September 26, 2015).